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Pisc





A

HISTORY

OF

THE CHURCH,

FROM ITS

ESTABLISHMENT TO THE PRESENT CENTURY.

Et portæ inferi non prævalent adversus eam.
Matth. xvi. 18.

Nam te ducimus, quæ præni latissimus annis,
Hæligo, Sacri custos sanctissimæ vtri,
Fida comes, tutela, et pectoris hospita nostri.
Simeoni

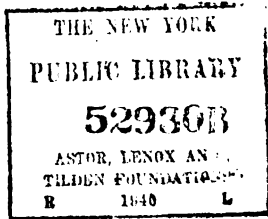
BY THE REVEREND CHARLES CONSTANTINE PIER.

VOL. I. *only*

Baltimore:

PUBLISHED BY P. BLENKINSOP.

1827.



DISTRICT OF MARYLAND, TO WIT:--

[L. S.] BE IT REMEMBERED, that on this tenth day of March, in the fifty-first of the Independence of the United States of America, PETER BLENKINSOP of the said District hath deposited in this office, the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Proprietor, the words following, to wit:--

" A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH. from its establishment to the present century.

Et portæ inferi non prævalerunt adversus eam.

Matth. xvi. 18.

*Non te deserimus, quam primis hausimus annis,
Religio, Sacri custos sanctissima veri,
Fida comes, tutela, et pectoris hospita nostri.*

Sanveuil.

By the Rev. CHARLES CONSTANTINE PISEL."

In conformity with the act of Congress, of the United States, entitled "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned;" and also to the Act entitled "An Act supplementary to the Act, entitled An Act, for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof, to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.

PHILIP MOORE.

Clerk of the District of Maryland.

TO THE

MOST REV. AMBROSE MARECHAL,

ARCHBISHOP OF BALTIMORE,

This Work is Respectfully Dedicated,

BY THE AUTHOR.



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PREFACE.

THE History which I now venture to lay before the public, was begun above five years ago, in conjunction with a young gentleman of eminent talents, and considerable attainments. At first, it was our design merely to gather notes, and collect facts, with a view to acquire a thorough knowledge of ecclesiastical history: it was not our intention, at that time, nor had we the least idea, to publish our writings. The undertaking had not proceeded far, before my companion quitted America, and went to Europe, to pursue his theological studies. His departure did not discourage me: for some time I continued my labour, on the original plan: but afterwards by the advice of friends, I was persuaded to retrace my course, and model my notes into the shape of a regular history: I at first shrunk from the trouble: for I did not deem myself adequate to the task: but reflecting that my efforts, whatever they may be, might prove useful to the public, I determined to encounter, with courage, every new difficulty, and continue my undertaking with the design of publishing it, provided it should meet the encouragement of my superiors. By them my attempt was viewed with peculiar complacency. For though aware that it could not be a perfect history, still they believed that, as the plan is much more extensive than that of any other in the English language, it might be of use: they knew that it was not in my power to enter profoundly into the subject: to consult all the original works: to verify all the references which I have collected from various authors: but still I had before me the principal writers: such as Baronius, Spondanus, Fleury.

Berti, &c. &c. from whom I endeavoured to extract what I considered to be most interesting, and authentic. Many facts, no doubt, I have omitted : perhaps some important ones : others I may not have represented in their most proper colours : the style in many particulars may be defective : several typographical inaccuracies may have escaped. Upon the indulgence of the reader I rely : it is my first, and a very considerable, attempt. I trust, however, notwithstanding all its defects, that it will not be unworthy the patronage, or disappoint the expectations, of my friends.

I. For greater perspicuity, I remarked in the advertisement, that I should divide the whole work into four periods. Considering the first (I mean the primitive ages) in its proper light : that is, as a source of virtue and science, and the basis of religion and piety, I shall endeavor to collect some few of the treasures scattered in profusion, through the ancient monuments : I do not, however, mean to make particular mention, much less to give the analysis, of the voluminous writings with which the early ages abound. The most comprehensive work could scarcely do justice to so boundless an undertaking. Nor do I mean to interrupt the career of history by my own remarks : but to afford abundant matter to interest the attention, and awaken the reflections, of the reader.

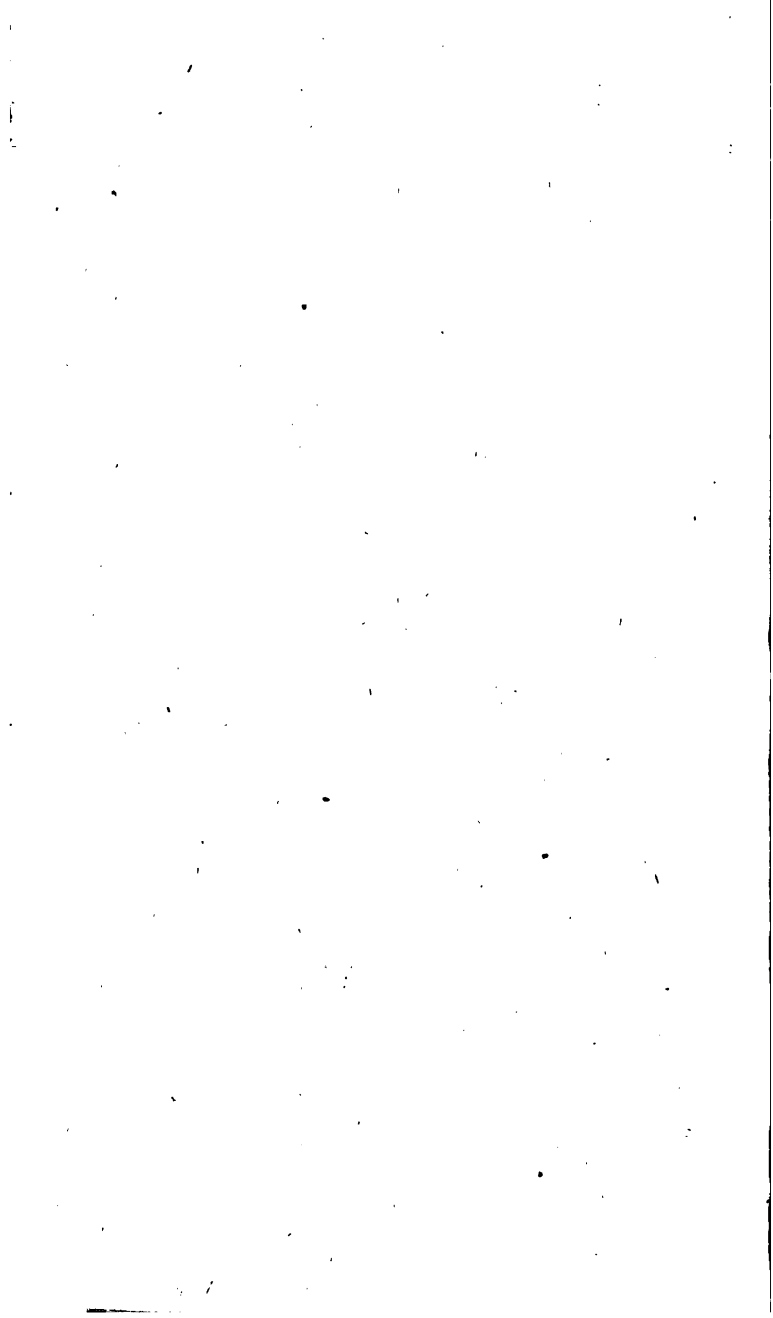
II. In the history of the second period which comprises the middle ages, I shall be still more succinct. I will not attempt to dispel the gloom which has been thrown, by many popular writers, over this period : nor will I deny that the torch of human science was very dim in some parts, and almost totally extinguished in others : but it must be remembered, that during these obscure ages, the church of Christ was not less under the protection of the Holy Ghost, than in its brightest and serenest days. The church, like the sun, may occasionally be enveloped in clouds : but she will emerge from them at length with a renovated lustre.

III. The history of the third period will be a history of revolutions : which were naturally followed by a relaxation of discipline and morals. It must, however, be carefully remarked, that the doctrine and morality of the church were always delivered pure and invariably the same : far from being able to cite a single canon to countenance depravity or error, the great body of the pastors insisted on Christian holiness ; and the lives of many, even of the laity, presented examples of the austere virtue.

IV. The history of the fourth and last period, as it approaches nearer our own times, is of all others, the most interesting : the monuments it presents are more numerous, and perhaps too, more satisfactory, than those of any other. It will consequently demand, and is entitled to, particular attention. In concluding this introduction, I may be allowed to indulge one reflection : there are not wanting, writers, who appear to triumph in exaggerating the vices of some of the popes. The vices of a few unworthy pontiffs, reflected disgrace merely on their own persons : they were not the result of their belief : the church rests not on the virtues of men, but on the power of God. Scandals are inevitable : this the Redeemer had long before declared. When they occur in the sanctuary, they are lamentable indeed : but amidst them all, the church preserved the palladium of faith unaltered and inviolate.

This, therefore, is the object of the present, and should be of every church history : to shew the unceasing protection of the Almighty over the great body of his people : the sanctity, as well as indefectibility of his church ; her beauty and splendour, even during the darkest and most gloomy periods. Nothing is better calculated to strengthen our faith and enkindle our fervour, than to contemplate the invariable providence of the Almighty over his church : against which the powers of darkness may contend, but " the gates of hell shall never prevail."

Baltimore, Saratoga-st, June 5, 1827.



PREPARATORY DISCOURSE.

THE origin of religion is coeval with that of mankind : and the church of Jesus Christ, considered in its widest extent, commences with the fall of Adam ; or the promise made to him, of a Redeemer, after having forfeited by sin, his claim to future happiness. Sinful man, much more fortunate than the rebellious angels, was elevated, by the infinite bounty of his Creator, to a rank, superior to that from which his fall had degraded him : from his seed was to be born, in the plenitude of time, a son like unto himself in every thing but sin : and, at the same time, perfectly equal to God ; that is true God, and true man. Uniting in one, undivided person, the divine and human nature : who having a natural right to the inheritance of Heaven, by dying on a cross for the salvation of his brethren, according to the flesh, communicated to them, a participation of his glorious privileges. Thus, man, fallen from the eminent holiness, to which the Creator had exalted him, at his birth, becomes, by the mediation of a God-man, not only the friend, but the child of God, and co-heir of Jesus Christ. At this memorable epoch, was established in its essence, the church : an institution, more wonderful and more honourable to the human kind than that state of innocence, in which Adam had been originally created. For man to profit by so great a benefit, *one* condition was, however, indispensable, viz : that all, as well under the natural, as under the Jewish law, should believe in the expected Redeemer : and hope from him, and from their works in conjunction with his merits, the forgiveness of sin, and everlasting happiness. The holy patriarchs transmitted the

saving tradition to their children : God himself frequently reminded them of his promises : and through the organs of men, inspired by himself, and by means of types and emblems, expressive of the truth ; he, one while, represented the eternal Pontiff, the “ Conciliator ” of heaven and earth, under the character of the priest and peaceful king of Salem ; another while, by the sufferings of the just man Job, he designated the great model of all justice, covered with opprobrium, and transfixed with sorrow.

In the mean time, the posterity of Adam, growing up, in the midst of darkness and corruption, instead of making use of the remedy offered them, augmented, by their actual crimes, the blindness which they had inherited from their fallen progenitor : abandoned themselves to every excess : and erected temples to the infernal author of their degradation. The most shocking profanations were substituted in lieu of the hallowed practices of *genuine* religion ; and the name and worship of the living God were almost forgotten in the world, which his power, and his wisdom had created. To save, from entire ruin, the seeds of future sanctity ; to preserve the memory of the expected Saviour of mankind, and to keep the image of the God-head, effectually imprinted on the human soul ; it became necessary to separate, from the carnal and corrupted mass, a chosen people : and to consign to their care, the preservation of those sacred traditions the accomplishment of which was, to annul the ceremonies and sacrifices of the Jewish law. The father of the faithful, in compliance with the commands of God, quitted the land of his birth, and proceeded to that, which had witnessed the origin of the human race ; and which, better than any other, could present to his contemplation, a vivid memorial of the mercies of the Creator. The promises of God were there renewed, either in words, or by figures adapted to the genius of the time and country : and calculated to make the deepest impressions on the human mind. To the son of Thare a promise was made, that he should not

only become the father of a people, more numerous than the stars of heaven, or the sands of the sea, but that, in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed. The former of these promises can be but imperfectly applied to the Hebrews, circumcised, as they were within the narrow boundaries of Palestine : the glory of the latter, can be ascribed to Jesus Christ alone : for in him, the descendant of Abraham, according to the flesh, all the nations of the earth have been blessed. Abraham, as the Lord commanded, imprinted on his own flesh the seal of the divine covenant, and the symbol of that indelible character, which the sacrament of regeneration was, one day, to engrave on the Christian soul. In his son Isaac, born contrary to the common laws of nature, of an aged father, bent under the weight of years, and a mother, who had been all her life time, barren : in Isaac, that child of benediction, who was commanded to carry the wood for his sacrifice, on his own shoulders, to the figurative mount, was represented the Messiah : born of a virgin mother, (whose virginal integrity remained nevertheless, after her maternity,) and bearing to mount Calvary the cross, on which he was to die, and atone for the sins of mankind. When the posterity of Abraham were to be delivered from Egyptian bondage, it was the blood of a lamb, a figure of him "that taketh away the sins of the world," that saved each family from the exterminating angel ; the multiplied sacrifices, prescribed by the Jewish laws, derived their virtue from the adorable victim, whom they prefigured. Who cannot see, in the emissary goat, loaded with the sins of Israel, HIM, who was, one day, to be dragged to the hill of Calvary ; to be immolated, for the iniquities of his people ? Who does not perceive him in the brazen serpent, raised up to the view of the Hebrew people, in the desert, that they might be healed by looking on it ? In the wonderful person of Sampson, who fought, like a host of men, against his enemies, and, in an instant, saved his nation, by sacrificing his own life. In a Jonas, swallowed by a whale and re-appearing, alive and sound at the expiration of the third day ?

If obscurity still linger on those types, which were, in truth, but the shadows of "future good things;" what a flood of light is poured on them by the revelations, and the oracles of the prophets? The Jewish legislator, (1) did not fail to admonish the people, that the reign of servile observances was to continue only for a while; and that the Lord was, one day to raise up a great prophet "who should be heard forever." The prophets (2) specify the time, place, and circumstances of his coming: The lowly village of Bethlehem, which was to be exalted, by his birth, above the wealthiest cities of Israel: the tribe of Judah and the "root of Jesse," from which his origin was to be derived: the precise epoch of his coming pointed out, by an event, no other, than the translation of the sceptre of Juda, into foreign hands. The exact number of years, at the close of which, he was to appear; and the very period, (3) in which he was to be denied and crucified, by his people. David (4) beheld the Son of God, whom he called also his Lord, issuing, before the birth of the morning star, from the bosom of the eternal; and sitting in the splendour of the saints, at the right hand of his father, on a throne more shining, and immoveable than the pillars of heaven. He heard the most High, addressing him from all eternity in this sublime language: (5) "Thou art my beloved Son: this day have I begotten thee." His empire is as extensive as the earth; his people He shall govern, in sweetness and

(1) PROPHE TAM de gente tua et de fratribus tuis fient me, suscitabit tibi Dominus Deus tuus, ipsum audies. Deut. cap. 18.

(2) ET TU BETHLEHEM Ephrata, parvulus es in millibus Juda: ex te mihi egredietur qui fit dominator in Israël, et egressus ejus ab initio, à diebus æternitatis. Mich. cap. 5.

(3) Scito egro, et animadvertite: Ab exitu sermonis, ut iterùm sêdificetur Jerusalem; usque ad Christum ducem, hebdomades septem, et hebdomades sexaginta duæ erunt: et rursum sêdificabitur platea, et muri in angustia temporum;

Et post hebdomades sexaginta duæ occidetur Christus, &c. Dan. cap. 9.

(4) Ps. 71 vide totum.

(5) Ps. 2. 7.

truth, and justice, and (1) "of his kingdom, there shall be no end."

The prophets have, in every age, published the same wonders : (2) and it is remarkable, that, in the decline of the Jewish empire, when the administration of affairs devolved on Simon, the only surviving brother of Judas Machabæus, the act of investiture specifies, "that neither he, nor his descendants, should retain it longer, than the coming of the expected Messiah." The knowledge of this great future event, was not confined to the country in which the God of Isaac had thought fit to reveal it, in a special manner. Holy Job, (3) in the midst of the pagan world, clearly professed his belief in the coming of a God man : and, in the plainest terms, informs us, that he firmly hoped one day, to contemplate his God, his Redeemer, living and visible, even to his human eye.

As this is not meant to be the history of the religion of God from its earliest institution, I shall not attempt to unravel the long unbroken series of prophecies : what I have hitherto enlarged on, was only to prepare the reader for the publication of the Gospel ; or rather for the establishment and propagation of the church, properly so called. As however, the errors of the Arian heresy have, after the sleep of so many ages, been resuscitated in our days, and in our country, it may perhaps be useful to the reader, to enter more at length on the discussion of a subject, which is of the first importance to the Christian world. We shall, therefore, present a few striking traits of Christ's divinity, from the prophet Isaiah ; who seems to be rather the historian,

(1) Et regni ejus non erit finis.

(2) Bossuet Hist univer. 2 Part. 5.

(3) Sico enim quòd Redemptor meus vivit, et in novissimo die de terra surreturus sum :

Et rursum circumbador pelle mea, et in carne mea videbo Deum meum.

Quem visurus sum ego ipse, et oculi mei conspecturi sunt, et non alius : reposita est hæc spes mea in sinu meo. Job. cap. 19.

than the prophet, of the Redeemer. From the commencement of his prophecy, he represents the Son of God in all his grandeur and divinity, as he is from all eternity in the bosom of his father. "Who" (1) he exclaims, "shall tell his generation, more bright and more ancient than the morning star! As to his temporal generation, he continues (2) a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son, the Prince of Peace, the Son of David, whose name is Emmanuel; that is, God with us: or, at once, both God and Man. (3) Darkness, he continues, shall cover the earth, and a mist the people: nations shall be wrapt in gloom: but when the splendour that is to illumine the birth of the Messiah, when the miraculous star of Jacob shall appear, the princes of the Gentiles shall commence their journey to adore him: they shall come from Saba, bringing gold and the rich presents of the east: With these, they shall load the dromedaries of Madian and Ephraim; kings shall feel honoured to be his fosterers, and with their heads bowed down to the earth, "shall adore him." In these sublime figures, he presents, in a no less striking manner, the wonders, which the DESIRED OF NATIONS was to operate in the moral, as well as in the physical, world. (4) "When our God shall appear, then shall the eyes of the blind be opened; and the ears of the deaf unsealed. The lame man shall leap as the hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be loosed: for "waters are broken out in the desert, and streams in the wilderness. And again: the Redeemer of the Lord shall return, and shall come into Sion, with praise; everlasting joy shall be on their heads, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away—the wolf shall forego his natural ferocity: the tiger and the lamb shall range the plains together, and the sting of the asp be blunted on "the sacred mountain;" that is cruelty, perfidy and crime, in every

(1) Isaiah 53.

(2) Isaiah 7. 14.

(3) Isaiah 60. 2, 3.

(4) Isaiah 35.

shape, shall be proscribed by the Gospel. Thus has the prophet himself explained it, in the astonishing cause, which he assigns to this new order of things. This prodigy, he adds, shall take place; for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. He marks, still more clearly, the establishment and the holy fecundity of the church; the mother of all nations: "Give (1) praise, O thou barren one that bearest not! sing forth praise, and make a joyful noise, thou that didst not travail with child, for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that liath a husband, saith the Lord. Thou shalt pass on the right hand and the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles; for he that made thee, shall rule over thee. The Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the holy one of Israel shall be called the God of all the earth. In a moment of indignation, I have hid my face from thee, a little while, but with *everlasting* kindness have I had mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. I shall found, for thee, a new habitation: It shall be more solid and more durable than the mountains: for the mountains shall be moved, and the hills tremble, but my mercy shall not be moved from thee; and the covenant of my peace shall not be moved: thy bulwarks shall be of Jasper: thy gates more shining and impenetrable than the sapphire and the diamond: but the strongest pillar of thy power and happiness shall be justice, on which thou shalt be founded, and the discipline of truth which thy children shall be taught by the *Holy one of Israel*."

To these features of grandeur and sublimity, the prophets add the pictures of the sorrows and approbrium, with which the Messiah was to be surrounded: it was necessary that the portrait should present a faithful likeness of the Redeemer's ministry. Our Heavenly Father, offended by the sins of mankind, had consented to pardon them, but he had not promised to do so, without an adequate reparation. On the contrary, he re-

(1) John 54, 60.

solved, while signalizing his mercy, to vindicate his majesty and justice, more terribly than he had done by the punishment of the rebel angels. No creature, however perfect, could of himself, make that adequate satisfaction : and man, without being at the same time God, could never have affected it. But *God*, unless at the same time, *man*, could not suffer ; could not be subject to contempt and humiliation ; and consequently could not make the necessary satisfaction. A God-man was, therefore required : and had the Messiah been any thing less, he would have been utterly inadequate to the great function of atonement and redemption.

Deeply impressed with this idea of the Saviour, Isaiah and David omit not to join the sufferings of the son of man, with the attributes of the Deity : and this even in detail, and with circumstantial minuteness. The royal prophet had foreseen the dislocation of the Messiah's limbs : the perforation of his hands and feet : his tongue dipped in vinegar and gall : his seamless vestment torn, and divided among the soldiers. He had heard the savage joy, expressed by his enemies, at his sufferings : and had seen them, like wild beasts slaking their thirst in his blood.

Isaiah beheld "the man of sorrow" (1) stricken by the hand of God, treated as the last of men, and reduced to a kind of annihilation : he saw, and represented him, scourged, disfigured, like a leper : pierced with nails, crowned with thorns : and covered with so many wounds, that, from head to foot, there remained of him, scarcely one feature of his divinity, or even his humanity ; he appeared less a man, than a worm, trampled under foot, says the prophet ; and yet, guilty of no crime ! The Lord had laid on him the burden of our iniquity ; and to expiate our sins, subjected him to ignominy and death : it is by his bruises ; by his generous oblation, that we are healed. He was immolated, because himself had wished it. Like an innocent lamb, he was

(1) Isaiah 53.

dragged to the slaughter, without complaining under the hand that bereaved him of his life.

Isaiah takes notice of his prayer for his crucifiers; his death in the company of two thieves; and his burial in the tomb of the rich man, or of Joseph of Arimathea. But what he publishes with peculiar triumph, is the glory of that sepulchre, so honoured, in after ages, by the homage of the greatest potentates, by the concourse of princes from the north and the south, the east and the west. Thus it is, that that sublime prophecy has explained, how, from the blood he was to shed for the sins of others, was to spring a long posterity; that he was to annihilate the power of the enemy of souls; and in a most glorious manner, "lead captivity captive."

Let any one who denies the divinity of Christ, take up the sacred text in which are found these oracles of truth, pronounced by different men, at different times, so many ages before the event took place: and let him then say whether the features of the prophetic picture are not distinctly and most accurately delineated, by the evangelists. I shall point out those passages, in the life of the "Word made flesh," which require to be dwelt on, with a more particular attention.

It is worth remarking, that notwithstanding the miraculous and glorious circumstances of his birth, his infancy and his youth, were spent in obscurity; unnoticed by the world. At the age of thirty years, he caused himself to be announced by the precursor, whom Isaiah had called "the voice of one that crieth from the wilderness." (1) Shortly after this, he appeared in public: he openly exercised the ministry of the word: he removed every veil that still concealed the meaning of the prophecies: he made the synagogue echo to the sound of truths, which it never before had heard: such grace and light did his language diffuse, that all who heard him exclaimed with astonishment: (2) "Is not this the

(1) Isaiah 40.

(2) Luke 4. 22. Joan. vi. 42.

son of the carpenter, Joseph!" Whence comes this depth of learning, seeing that he has never been taught!

The world, in fact, had never witnessed any thing like the divine facility with which he unfolded the sacred mysteries; the purity and sublimity of the doctrine which he announced; and the power which he exercised over the evil spirits. Passing near the lake of Galilee, he saw two fishermen: Simon, afterwards surnamed Peter, and Andrew, his brother, employed in mending their nets: he said to them, "follow me:" (1) and they abandoned all things, and followed him. He associated to himself, in the same manner, all his disciples: and sometimes with such promptness, as not even to allow them time sufficient, to render the last rites of sepulture to a parent: and with such perseverance, as never to look back after having once put the hand to the sacred work. Multitudes of people flocked to him, with a similar ardour. He directed their hearts: enlightened their minds: and exercised the ministry of the word, in a manner, evidently superior to the limited power of the scribes and pharisees.

What admirable lessons did he teach: did he not infinitely exceed, the expectations of the multitude, in his first sermon on the mountain! (2) What ideas of virtue and perfection elevated above the maxims of the wisest legislators, or the most austere reformers. Whence did he derive that sublime, that pure, that original morality, of which he gave the first striking lesson, in the discourse of which we are now speaking. In the midst of a carnal people, who seemed to attach their salvation to their material temple, and the observances of a ceremonious and external worship: at a time, when the doctrine handed down by Moses, had become vitiated by traditions, which had been multiplied and confused by different sects: he delivered the sublimest lessons:

(1) Matthew, 4 19.

(2) Job, 5.

which manifestly prove, that he who announced them, could have derived them from himself alone. "If your justice, said he to his disciples, exceed not that of the scribes and pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven: you have heard it said; "You shall love your brother, and hate your enemy; but I say to you, bless them that curse, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you. It is written, 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I command you to carry your perfections so far, as to turn the left cheek to him, who strikes you on the right; and to him who taketh away your cloak, give up your coat also. In the law of Moses, you were forbidden to put away your wives, without first obtaining a bill of divorce: but, I say to you, whoever, henceforth, shall abandon his wife, or marry a woman so repudiated, shall be guilty of adultery. Know that he who looks on a woman, with an evil intention, has already committed adultery with her, in his heart. You have, hitherto, been forbidden to profane the name of God: but I forbid you every unnecessary oath; or to swear, even by creatures: for in them, you must reverence the Creator. You must not only abstain, exteriorly, from evil, but even from the thoughts and affections of evil: for they stain the soul of him, who indulges them. Even in your deeds of piety, do not think that you are innocent, if your motives be not diligently purified. When you give alms, do not sound the trumpet before you, as hypocrites; but rather let not your right hand know what is done by the left: seek not that vain recompense, which this world can bestow; but the regard of Him, whose eye sees your most hidden actions. Be not solicitous for riches, which rust can destroy, and which can fall into the hands of robbers: but, let your treasures, your hearts, and your affections be all centered in heaven. In a word, be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

How sublime are the maxims of this legislation? but what is more striking still is, that whilst other legislators only trace c...

speculative rules of virtue, without giving the means of reducing them to practice, the Christian law-giver affords us grace to follow his sublimest lessons; and renders public sinners, the masters and models of perfection. At his first invitation, Matthew, (1) a publican, abandons all things and becomes one of his most zealous co-operators. The chief of the publicans, Zachæus, (2) rivals in piety, the most fervent among the people of God: and by his generous charity, confounds the ostentation of the pharisees. The sinful woman (3) of Jerusalem performs an exemplary penance, and holds a conspicuous rank among the saints that have been formed in the school of Jesus. The prostitute of Samaria, (4) not only forsakes her schism, and voluptuous life, but becomes an apostle among her countrymen. The thief is converted on the cross, (5) so miraculously, that the same day which saw him condemned for his crimes, to lose his life upon a gibbet, witnessed his enrolment among the blessed in heaven.

The divine author of the law of grace, gives to the weakest souls a more than merely human perfection: and imparts to the dullest capacities a profound knowledge of the things of God. The greater number of the Jews, notwithstanding their prophets and the law they had received, could not even name the first of our mysteries. If, when they styled the God of Israel, HIM THAT IS, they knew how to express, in a general manner, the independence and attributes of his being, at least they knew not, how to specify the precise manner of his being, in *Three Persons*, all equally endowed with unlimited perfection.

In the happiest days of the Hebrews, Solomon put to them this singular question; "Tell unto me the name of God, and the

(1) Matt. 9 9.

(2) Luke 19 5.

(3) Luke 7. 38.

(4) Joan 4. 7, &c.

(5) Joan 23, 43.

name of his Son, if you know it." (1) But Jesus Christ informs us that this mysterious name is that of *Father*: but of a father, who, from all eternity, engenders a son, co-equal to himself; and that the name of that son, the image of the eternal Father's substance and perfections, is no other than "The Word." With the Father and the Son reigns also the Holy Ghost; the substantial love of both, and the eternal bond of their inseparable union. It was for this Son, who resided in the bosom of the Father, and, at the same time, dwelt among us; it was for him "that shineth in darkness" (2) to manifest to the faithful in general, what had hitherto been known only to the special friends of God, to the patriarchs and prophets; and which created astonishment in the cherubim themselves. It was for him to teach us that the Messiah, the Saviour of men, himself a man, should at the same time, be announced under the unalienable appellation and attributes of the Deity; whence it is, that he is God, "*and the son of God*," and at the same time, man and "*the son of man*." In a word, it was reserved for him alone to teach us, that he is an incarnate God; and that, in order to reconcile all things in himself, he unites, in his person, the divine and human natures.

He performed in like manner, the wonders of an omnipotent being, during many successive years; he travelled through Palestine, working the most extraordinary miracles in behalf of the people, and he alone appeared insensible to the sentiment of wonder which his prodigies excited. The raising of Lazarus from the dead, he styles the waking of one who had been asleep; (3) to the paralytic, who had been afflicted thirty-eight years, he says without the least emotion, "take up thy bed and walk;" (4) with equal composure and effect, he commands every spe-

(1) Prov. 30.

(2) Joan 1. 5

(3) Joan. xi. 9,

(4) Matth. 9 6

cies of sickness : and all the powers of hell. The principle of his divine operations is in his own power : they flow from that source, and sometimes appear to anticipate his orders. When the woman, afflicted for so many years, with an issue of blood, (1) had merely touched the hem of his garment, "I feel," said he, that virtue has gone out from me ; and that virtue, says the evangelist, went forth abundantly ; and multitudes were healed. He proves himself no less the model of perfection, than the teacher of truth, and Lord of nature. "Which of you can convince me of sin," (2) did he say to a multitude of his enemies who watched, with censorious jealousy, all his actions. Not one among them could reach him with the slightest fault, for which there was the least foundation. If they pretended to be scandalized, at his keeping company with publicans and sinners, the scandal existed only in the minds of the pharisees ; whose pride and envy gave utterance to such reproaches against him, who was, at once, the most innocent, and the greatest of the children of men.

But the more than angelic purity of his manners the darkest malice never dared call in question : He openly gloried, and no one could convince him of the contrary, that his sole occupation was to do the will of his Heavenly Father.

What assiduity in the temple ; his only residence in Jerusalem, on all the festivals, and at all exercises of a religion which was merely figurative, and on the eve of being abolished ; but which he honored, to the moment, marked out, by the Lord, for the exaltation of his Christ ? What zeal for the house of God : it was like a devouring fire. The prince of peace, in his whole life, never expressed a sentiment, of anger, except against the profane men, who made the house of prayer a den of thieves. (3)

(1) Matth. 20.

(2) Joan 8. 46.

(3) Matth. 21. 13.

What reverence did he not testify for the chair of Moses, notwithstanding the unworthiness of those who sat in it? (1)—What deference did he pay to the priests? To them he sends the lepers whom he had healed, and submits his divine works to their examination. What generosity! what disinterestedness! what an entire detachment from the desires and pleasures of this life!

More destitute than the beasts of the forest, he knew not where to rest his head: (2) king of kings, in as much as he was God; and as man, heir to the throne of David, the people, at one time, penetrated with veneration for the august majesty of his person, wished to establish him in the possession of his rights, and he flies from among them as if from some impending calamity. (3) He is scrupulously exact in the payment of the tribute; and if he wishes us to render unto God, the things that are God's, he also requires a profound respect for, and obedience to, the laws of the country, in which we live. (4)

How great in his charity and his love of doing good: of such virtues, his whole life was a perpetual series. That no country might be excluded from his benedictions, he travelled, without ceasing, over Judea and Galilee, to the confines even of Tyre and Sidon; though not directly sent to those idolatrous cities. He did good to the jealous pharisees, as well as to the faithful Israelites: wrought miracles, and displayed his glory only when conducive to the advantage of his people. If he refused to work in the heavens those signs, which the Jews required as the test of his divinity: he delivered those possessed by the evil spirit: cured the sick, raised the dead to life: converted sinners and imparted vigor both to soul and body. No envy, nor ingratitude

(1) Job 25. 2 and 3.

(2) Matth. 2. 80.

(3) Joan 6. 15.

(4) Matt. 23. 21.

neither dangers nor treachery could check the progress and extent of his charity. His own disciples were astonished at the intrepidity, with which he returned to the places where his life had been endangered : and where but a few days before, his enemies had nearly succeeded in effecting his death.

In fine, what strength, and what divine fortitude in the consummation of his sacrifice ! here his virtue is supported by itself alone : no comfort from his friends : no applause from the multitude. The people witnessed the greatness of his soul, but blasphemed his heroism. The most vaunted of the philosophers of old, (1) seeking an idea of perfect virtue, discovered, that as there could be no mortal, more odious than the wicked man, who, by his hypocrisy, could succeed in attaching to himself all the reputation and esteem of virtue : so the most estimable would be the unfortunate just man, who though worthy of all the recompense of virtue, should be covered with the shame of guilt : in such a manner, that having no other friend than his conscience, he should see himself condemned to suffer death, by all who knew him. Just and admirable idea, with which the pagan philosopher was, as many fathers have observed, inspired, only to show how it was exemplified in the saviour of the world : with this additional circumstance, that he was not only to die without ostentation but also without fear. Such virtue could belong to him alone, who was, at once, both God and man. A virtue, which appears with greater splendour through the opprobrium with which his enemies endeavoured to conceal it, at his death, than in the brightest actions of his life : and which, notwithstanding the scandal of the Jew, and the sneers of the gentile, imprints on the mystery of the cross, the seal of the power and the wisdom of God : The august victim underwent a voluntary sacrifice ; he had foreseen that death which so many prophets had announced : he had foretold all the circumstances of it : he delivered himself up, when

(1) Plato de Repub. l. 2.

the "hour" of the power of darkness had arrived : and, in surrendering himself to his enemies, had forbidden them to attempt the life or liberty of his disciples : he was silent, in his own defence : he whose divine eloquence had so often confounded the envy and malice of his enemies, disdained the protection of the Roman governor ; who, for a single answer, would have set him at liberty. Pilate felt, for such supernatural magnanimity a sentiment of admiration, mingled with fear : Christ refused to work one of those miracles ; which were so familiar to him, to satisfy the curiosity of Herod : whose first expressions of good will, were turned into an affectation of compassion, as false as it was contemptible. He opened not his mouth, but to pardon the outrages committed against him ; to pray for his enemies ; to accomplish the prophecies, until all was consummated. In the mean time, the earth trembles : the rocks burst asunder : the tombs fly open : the veil of the temple is rent : the sun, shrouded by no natural cause, leaves the world in darkness, for three hours. The disorder of nature does homage to the divinity of Jesus Christ : and he himself, to prove that his death was not the effect of weakness, uttered a groan, so loud and extraordinary, that the centurion, as well as some of the guards, returned striking their breasts, and exclaiming, "truly, this man was the son of God." (1) The third day after he was crucified, he raised himself from the dead : appeared to his disciples : confirmed his apostles, the pillars of that church which was one day to embrace all the nations of the earth : and caused Peter to be acknowledged as prince of the apostles. To him and to his colleagues in the apostleship, he confided the power, given him by his Father ; promising to be with them all days, even to the consummation of the world. (2) At the same time he forbade them to commence their ministry, until they should have received the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost.

(1) Matt. 27. 54. Marc. 15 39.

(2) Matt. 16. 18. 19. &c. Id. 28.

Remain, he said to them before his ascension into heaven, remain at Jerusalem, until you shall be clothed with strength from on high. In fine, the fortieth day after his resurrection, he blessed his disciples, to the number of five hundred, and in their presence, ascended triumphantly into heaven. The disciples, as he had commanded them, returned to Jerusalem, and continued in prayer and recollection expecting the fulfilment of his promise.

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

CHAPTER I.

EMPERORS OF ROME.

CALIGULA.

CLAUDIUS.

NERO.

POPE.

S. PETER.

From the establishment of the church, to the death of S. Peter and S. Paul. Anno 69.

TO the pen of an inspired writer we are indebted for the history of the first establishment of the church. From the acts of the apostles we learn, that Peter, the head of the apostolic college and vicar of the Redeemer, proposed, in the 33d year of Christ, (1) to fill up the place

(1) This is the ordinary calculation.

of the traitor Judas. In virtue of the supreme dignity with which he was invested, he addressed his colleagues, and the disciples, to the number of about an hundred and twenty, and insisted on the necessity of appointing a substitute in the room of the unfortunate traitor. He was heard, with the respect due to the first pastor. All submitted to his judgment, and immediately took measures to carry his proposal into execution. Two candidates were nominated: Joseph, called in Hebrew, Barsabas, which signifies the just; and Matthias. The necessary qualifications and eminent virtues of each, were so balanced, that it was deemed proper to leave the choice to the will of Providence. That choice was to be determined by lot; it fell upon Matthias: who was ~~immediately~~ raised from the condition of a simple disciple, to the sublime dignity of an apostle. Thus were filled, without exception, the twelve thrones, on which, according to the expression of Jesus Christ, were to be seated the pastors, sent to the twelve tribes of Israel. Besides Peter, their chief, and Matthias, whose lot we have just seen determined, the ten other apostles were: John and James, the sons of Ze-

bedee; Andrew, the brother of Peter, and the first called; Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew; Matthew or Levi, who had been a publican; James, called the less, son of Alpheus, and of Mary sister or cousin german to the blessed Virgin; Simon of Cana; and Jude or Thaddeus brother to James the less. These were the ministers chosen by the Almighty, for the execution of the most noble and wonderful designs. All, with the exception of Matthew, selected from the lowest orders of society, possessing neither learning nor fortune, and brought up, from their earliest youth, in the meanest occupations. They continued in recollection and prayer, during the space of ten days, until the first day of Pentecost, or of the offering of the first fruits of the harvest; one of the three principal feasts of the people of God. About the ninth hour of the morning, (1) "there was heard a loud noise, as it were of a mighty wind." In a moment they were changed, elevated above all human things, and replenished with light and knowledge. In a word, they became courageous apostles, and worthy ministers of God. Unable

(1) Acts. ii.

to contain within themselves, the sacred ardour with which their hearts were inflamed, they sallied forth from their retreat, and rendered public testimony of the divinity and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It was perceived that they spoke various languages. The solemnity which the Jews were then celebrating had gathered, at Jerusalem, strangers, from almost every region: Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia; Phrygia and Pamphilia, Egypt and the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews also and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians; that is to say, Jews born in these several countries. Never before, had there met together such a numerous concourse for the celebration of the passover, and the succeeding festivals. If we may credit Josephus, the Jewish historian, (1) the whole world was persuaded, that the time marked out by the prophecies had arrived; and the Messiah about to appear. The Apostles announced the gospel to the assembled multi-

(1) Joseph. lib. Bell. vii. 12.

tudes. They replied to the questions and difficulties proposed to them : and the stranger from every country was addressed by them in his native language. Never ~~before~~ had the world witnessed, or heard of, such a prodigy. The fact was evident. Peter the chief of the apostolic college, addressed himself, to the people. He showed in the clearest manner, how all the prophecies had been accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ : that he, whom they had a few weeks before, crucified, was in reality, the Son of God, and the Messiah. At his first sermon, three thousand Jews believed, and were baptized. Sometime (1) afterwards, as Peter and the "beloved disciple" were going, about the hour of prayer, to the temple ; (for the circumcised faithful, wishing to show their respect for the synagogue until its total extinction, still observed the exercises of the Mosaic law,) they met at the gate of the temple, called the BEAUTIFUL, a beggar who had been born lame ; and who, for many years, was accustomed to sit at this gate, soliciting alms from those who passed by. He was

(1) Jos. Ant. xiv. 8.

known to all the city. He exposed his miserable condition to the apostles, and besought them to relieve him. The spirit of God inspiring them, they said to him, ~~with one~~ voice, "Look upon us;" he obeyed, with all the eagerness of hope: "Silver and gold we have none," resumed Peter, "but ~~what~~ we have, that will we give to thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The lame man was cured on the spot.

After this, they all three advanced to the porch of Solomon: the people collected from every direction: and Peter soon saw himself surrounded by an immense multitude, impatient to hear the particulars of the miracle, which had just been operated. Peter said to them: "Ye men of Israel, why wonder you at this? And why look upon us, as if by our own power, we had made this man to walk? The God of our fathers hath glorified his Son Jesus Christ, whom you indeed, delivered up, and denied before the face of Pilate, when he judged he should be released. ~~¶~~ But you denied the Holy and the Just One; and desired a murderer to be granted to you; but the Author of life you killed; whom

God hath raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses, and his name, through the faith of his name, hath made this man strong, whom you have seen and known : and the faith which is by him, hath given this perfect soundness, in the sight of you all : and now brethren, I know that you did it through ignorance, as also your rulers ; but those things which God had foretold, by the mouth of his prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye, therefore, and be converted ; that your sins may be blotted out ; and that you be not excluded from the benedictions, promised to our fathers, and in the race of Abraham, to all the earth. Behold we have reached the time predicted by all the prophets, and of which Moses in particular, has said “ A prophet shall the Lord your God, raise up unto you, out of your brethren, like unto me ; him you shall hear according to all things, whatsoever he shall speak to you ; and it shall be, that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.”

Five thousand persons, exclusively of women and children, were converted by this discor

(1) in defiance of the tumults excited by the priests, the ministers of the temple, and a crowd of angry saducees. This sect, though divided among themselves, became united when there was question of persecuting the disciples of Jesus Christ. The priests could not endure to witness so glorious, and so public a testimony rendered to the Saviour; and the latter, disbelieving the resurrection of the body, were fired with rage, at the proof derived from the resurrection of Christ, in favour of the future resurrection of the dead. They seized upon the two apostles, as also the beggar who had been healed. As it was now late, they put them under a strong guard, until (2) the following day. In the morning, the Sanhedrim was assembled: Annas, the father-in-law of Caiphas, presided over this supreme counsel of the Jews; which consisted of seventy-one members: of which twenty-four were chiefs of the priesthood, and the rest doctors and levites, chosen from the several tribes. It assembled only on business of the first importance. The apostles, being conducted into the syna-

(1) Acts. iv.

(2) Thal. Cod. Sanh. C. 1 et Seq.

gogue, were asked, in what name, or by what virtue, they had wrought so great a miracle? Peter fearlessly replied, that it was in the name Jesus, whom they had crucified: and that nothing should ever prevent him from referring the glory of the miracle to its proper author. That this same Almighty benefactor, the foundation stone, mentioned by the prophets, though rejected by men, was still the basis of the great edifice of man's salvation: and that there was no other name under heaven, except the name of Jesus, by which mankind could be saved.

Such firmness and knowledge of the scriptures, in men, who, but a few days before, were so cowardly and ignorant, awakened the astonishment of the Sanhedrim. They saw, standing near them, the lame man, who had been healed by the apostles: and they knew not to what pretended cause to attribute the fact, in order to compass, with decency, the object of the council. For the present, they remanded the prisoners to their confinement; and, after a long deliberation, contented themselves with forbidding them to preach for the future, in the name of Jesus. Such an order, replied th

apostles, we will not obey. Judge of it, by that law which we mutually revere. "Is it just to hear men, rather than God?" Again did the members of the Sanhedrim threaten the apostles; but as they feared the people, who were publicly giving glory to the Lord, for what they had seen, they found it necessary to set the prisoners at liberty.

Peter and John recounted to the faithful what had taken place: all blessed God, whose power nothing can resist: but prudently foreseeing, that the peace, granted by the synagogue, would be of short duration, they besought the Almighty to give to the preachers of his name, together with the gift of miracles, the grace to make them tend to his greater glory. Heaven showed, in a sensible manner, that their prayer was heard. The place in which the apostles and disciples were assembled, was shaken; and all present received, with still more abundance, the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The deep impressions which the divine word made on the hearts of those, to whom it was announced, and who received it with humility, were still more salutary, than the gifts of

tongues and miracles. The whole city of Jerusalem was struck at the pious and recollected demeanour of the first Christians. But what principally arrested the notice of a people, so proverbially carnal, and singularly attached to the good things of this life, was the disinterestedness which they observed among the followers of the new law ; who indeed resembled angels, rather than men. The community of the faithful had but one heart and one soul : no individual possessed any thing which was not at the same time common to all. They sold their possessions and laid the price of them at the feet of the apostles ; who distributed it to all, as from a common fund. Thus, for the first time, were to be seen, men equally removed from riches and poverty. The days of this blessed society flowed happily away, in innocence, and virtue, and undisturbed tranquillity.

The idea of such a community of goods, (1) and detachment from the world, was presented to the primitive Christians by the Essenians ; a sect of Jews, who had the reputation of being

(1) Jos. Bell, 2, 12.

more holy than their brethren : but who, at the same time, were more proud and superstitious. They were jealous of a certain independency, which taught them to acknowledge no superior but God ; and ready to sacrifice their lives, rather than submit to the commands of men, no matter how just. This shows how far removed they were from the pure and solid virtues of the Christians : who were not less humble than disinterested : and while they were the most edifying, were, at the same time the most charitable and useful members of society.

The apostles were careful to cultivate these first fruits of grace ; especially in the proselytes, whose numbers were every day increasing : they scrupulously attended to their discipline and morals ; and regularly convened the brethren, at the house of some of the disciples of distinguished virtue.

Thus they assisted at the adorable mysteries : received the sacraments, and were instructed in the doctrines and counsels of the Redeemer. One house not being sufficient to contain all, they were obliged to divide into separate communities : which formed as it were, so many

congregations, in the different quarters of Jerusalem. They were under the direction of at least one priest, ordained according to the ceremonies of the new law, with some inferior ministers. We learn from St. Epiphanius, that, in the first age of the church, the apostles established as well bishops and deacons without priests, as priests and deacons, without bishops. But as for the first order of the hierarchy, I mean bishops, their ordinary functions were like those of the apostles, viz: to announce the gospel, with more dignity and authority: to confound the incredulous: to visit the rising churches: to strengthen the faithful in their belief, and to disseminate the principles of the Christian religion.

This discipline, and the usages of the primitive church, necessarily differed from those of our time: though in matters of only secondary importance. The empire and the different kingdoms were distributed into fixed and limited diocesses, only in proportion as nations and provinces embraced Christianity. But before imparting it to the Gentiles, the first ministers of the gospel had to communicate its

saving light to that proportion of the children of Israel, whose eyes were not obstinately closed against it. Such was the progress of the apostles and their co-operators : and in some measure, the origin of that apostolic discipline, which, thenceforth marked the distinction between things of strict obligation and those of mere counsel or perfection. Of the latter kind, was the entire renunciation of their personal property. Sincerity was rigorously insisted on, in all who made professions of this alienation from earthly goods. And it was deemed an act of mere hypocrisy to pretend to make a public sacrifice of their property, if, at the same time, they reserved any part of it for their private use.

Among those who were conspicuous for this detachment, we find the name of Joseph, a Levite, originally from Cyprus : he sold his estate and delivered up the price of it to the apostles. They gave him the surname of Barnabas ; that is, child of consolation ; and made him partaker, with themselves, of the functions and dignity of the apostleship, in which he soon became distinguished.

Another disciple, named Ananias, undertook, together with his wife, Saphira, to deceive the prince of the apostles. They retained a part of the sum, for which their property had been sold ; and presented the rest to be added to the common funds. God revealed the criminal dissimulation to the head of the church ; and punished it with more than ordinary rigour. The precedent was necessary to confirm the authority of the apostles, and maintain the purity of the rising church. Ananias, said Peter, you have lied to God, and not to man. Struck with these words, as with a thunderbolt, Ananias fell dead at the apostle's feet. Three hours after, Saphira made her appearance : she, unacquainted with the fate of her unfortunate husband, answered as he had done, to the questions of St. Peter : and shared the same fate. This terrible visitation of the Almighty's anger, produced the most salutary effects, not only among the faithful, but even among strangers : who conceived an exalted idea of the power of that God, who thus watched over and vindicated the glory of his church.

Numerous and extraordinary wonders were wrought by the apostles : every species of sickness obeyed their voice : multitudes of maimed, or infirm, or helpless beings, lined the ways where Peter passed, and by virtue of his very shadow, were restored to health and soundness.

These miracles rapidly augmented the numbers of the faithful, and the carnal Jews, who still refused to believe in a crucified God, were unable to weaken the faith, or diminish the fervour, of the Neophytes. The sacrilegious envy of the enemies of Christ, could not, however, be at rest, and to humble his followers in the public opinion, they resolved to give a judicial form to a persecution, the most unjust and the most cruel. The principal agents, in this cabal, were the high-priest, and the members of his council. They seized on the apostles, and threw them into prison ; but an angel of God, during the night, loosened their chains, and they walked unmolested through the sentinels that surrounded them. The apostles, as the celestial envoy had directed, went immediately to the temple, and fearlessly announced the word of life. The high-priest and council beheld them

with surprise; and embarrassment: but could devise no artifice to cover their confusion. At length they concluded on again summoning the apostles before them: when they appeared, the high priest asked, why they had again, in contempt of his orders, preached the divinity of a dead man, whom they pretended to be the Christ, the Son of God? Peter answered as before, that it was better to obey God, than man: and with more energy than ever, added that Jesus Christ, whom they had crucified, but who had been gloriously raised to life, was the Saviour, from whom all Israel was to expect the pardon and remission of their sins. The courage and intrepid zeal of Peter, aroused the jealous indignation of the high priest; and the council was on the point of again proceeding to extremities, against him and his colleagues, when a venerable doctor, named Gamaliel, checked their fury by an advice, marked alike with wisdom and simplicity. “Why” said he, “disturb these men? if their undertaking be a human one, it will fall of itself: but if it be the work of God, in vain will you oppose it.” On hearing this, their indignation partially subsided,

The apostles, after being ignominiously scourged, were dismissed, with a strict injunction never again to preach in the name of Jesus. They retired, full of joy for having been accounted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ: and, far from being intimidated, appeared to breathe an unusual ardour, and preached Christ crucified, not only in the temple, but in the private houses of Jerusalem.

The number of proselytes had so much increased, that the apostles were unable to discharge all the various functions of their ministry. They were therefore obliged to choose, from among the faithful, seven men, of irreproachable lives, and in a special manner, filled with the Holy Ghost. They accordingly elected Stephen, a man distinguished for his ardent charity; Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas. The apostles, by the imposition of hands, conferred on them the holy order of deaconship: to them was assigned the office of distributing alms, and administering the sacrament of the Eucharist, in the different quarters of Jerusalem.

Stephen was soon engaged in dispute with the

doctors of the synagogue. The whole city admired the strength of his reasoning; his eloquence; and above all, the miracles, which he continually wrought before the people. The doctors finding it impossible to resist the force of his arguments, suborned witnesses to accuse him of blasphemy. He was accordingly arrested, and brought before the high priest; who, for the express purpose of interrogating the holy deacon, ascended the tribunal. Stephen, appeared with dignity, and spoke with freedom: He reproached them with the murder of the prophets; and accused them of having sacrilegiously put to death the Son of God. His discourse fired the members of the synagogue with anger and indignation: but Stephen calmly looking up to heaven, from whence he expected his reward, beheld the divine humanity of Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father.—“Behold, he exclaimed: (1) I see the heavens open, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” Unable, any longer to restrain their fury, they rushed upon him in a body, without

(1) Acts, vii. 55.

the formality of a trial, dragged him out of the city, and laying down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul, they stoned him. Saul, at this period, deceived by the fanaticism and prejudice of the Jews, became afterwards the "vessel of election," so conspicuous among the other apostles. His conversion is attributed to the prayers of the holy martyr. The body of Stephen, contrary to the custom observed with regard to criminals legally condemned, was buried by the pharise Gamaliel; who afterwards removed the relic to a country mansion, which he had built, about eight leagues from Jerusalem; he himself was afterwards interred on the same spot, together with his nephew, Nicodemus, who had formerly embalmed the body of the Redeemer. The persecution raised against the faithful in Jerusalem, served only to diffuse more widely, the light of the true religion. Whilst the apostles carefully guarded the first converts from the danger of seduction, the other evangelical labourers dispersed through those parts of Palestine, more immediately subject to the Roman governor, and soon after through Phœnicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. The disciple

Ananias penetrated even to Damascus; where he founded a church, composed exclusively of converted Jews; for the gospel had not yet been announced to the gentiles. In the mean time, the faithful were imprisoned, and put to death, at Jerusalem, where Saul became more furious than ever. He had received a special commission from the magistrates, to do all manner of evil to the Christians; and he seized indiscriminately, on men and women, all of whom were scourged by order of the synagogue.

While the Jews, dwelling in Jerusalem, continued blind and obstinate, the Samaritans, another portion of the house of Israel, received the gospel with very different dispositions. The doctrine of salvation was announced to this people by Philip, one of the seven deacons, with great success, and confirmed by many striking miracles.

At this period, (1) there dwelt in Samaria a man, named Simon; a native of Giton, in the same country. So great was the reputation which he gained by the art of magic, that he

(1) Just. ap. 2.

was surnamed, "the virtue of God." Unable to resist the arguments of the holy Levite, he pretended to be a proselyte; and desired to receive the sacrament of baptism. Meanwhile, St. Peter and St. John had left, for a time, the brethren of Jerusalem, to administer confirmation to the Neophytes of Samaria. The gift of tongues, and of miracles, almost invariably, accompanied the reception of this sacrament. Thinking that it might be purchased, Simon offered a sum of money for this sublime prerogative. But Peter, with a holy indignation, replied: "Thy money be with thee to perdition." He, however, advised him to repent: Simon affected to do so; but it appears, that his repentance was nothing more than a hypocritical humility, caused by the presence of the minister of the Lord. The shame of his infamous traffic has remained stigmatised on his name: and both shall ever be identified with sacrilege. In concert with an infamous prostitute (1) from Tyre, he broached the first heresy; a shocking compound of the mythology of the pagans, the er-

(1) Ir. l. 1. c. 20.

rors of the Jews and Saducees, and adulterated passages from the Holy Scripture. This heresy, the first that ever appeared in the church, continued till the close of the second century, when it was utterly extinguished. •

Peace was still reigning among the faithful at a distance from Jerusalem ; and the gospel was, every day, making extensive progress. Saul, fired with indignation at its triumph, received authority from the high pontiff, to persecute the faithful ; and, immediately, went towards Damascus, where Ananias had persuaded a number of the Israelites to embrace the faith. But, on his way to Damascus, Saul was suddenly enveloped in a celestial light ; prostrated to the ground, with all that followed him, and at the same instant, heard a voice saying to him, in the Hebrew tongue : “ Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? ” Saul answered, “ Lord, who art thou ? ” I am, replied the Saviour, “ Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. Lord, he returned, what wilt thou have me do ? ” And Jesus said to him : “ go into the city, and there thou shalt receive my orders. But know, that, henceforth, thou shalt be a preacher of the

wonder thou hast witnessed ; not only to the Jews, but also to the gentiles." Saul, (he had been struck blind during this mysterious interview,) was conducted to Damascus by his astonished companions, where he remained, three days, in prayer and meditation ; until Ananias healed him of the twofold blindness, of soul and body. After he was baptized, he appeared in the midst of the synagogue, proclaiming and vindicating the divinity of Jesus Christ. Shortly afterwards, he returned to Jerusalem, where he spent fifteen days in the house of St. Peter ; from whom, it is believed, he received the priestly and episcopal ordination ; his mission having been already derived from Jesus Christ himself.

In the meantime, Pilate was banished to Gaul, where, after a variety of misfortunes, he put an end to his own existence. Similar to his was the fate of Antipas, the son of the murderer of the holy innocents. He was denounced to Caligula, as a traitor, and an accomplice of Sejanus, in the preceding reign. In consequence of which, after the loss of all his property, he fled with his wife, the infamous Herodias, to Spain, where they both miserably perished.

In the mean time, Peter, having visited the distant churches, greatly augmented the number of the proselytes, by his miracles, of which two are peculiarly striking, viz: the healing at Lydda, of a paralytic, named Æneas, who had been eight years confined to his bed: and the raising to life the charitable Tabitha, at Joppa. For a minute narration of these, as well as many other miracles, the reader is referred to the acts of the apostles.

At this epoch, the first of the gentiles was brought to the faith, at Joppa, in the person and family of a Roman centurion, named Cornelius: In the midst of idolatry he had merited by the purity of his life, and his sincerity in quest of truth, to be favored with a vision from heaven: in which he was commanded to send for the prince of the apostles. Peter, at the same time, had a similar vision: which was scarcely over, when the messengers of Cornelius came to inquire for him. He departed with them the following morning; and on his arrival at the centurion's house, instructed him in the mysteries of the gospel. But the Holy Ghost, becoming

himself his teacher, conferred on him, in a miraculous manner, the gift of tongues. It was extremely difficult for the faithful who followed St. Peter, to divest themselves of their prejudices against the gentiles. They had, hitherto, believed them forever excluded from the church of God : but the vicar of Jesus Christ felt it wrong to refuse the sacrament of regeneration to him who had, already, received the Holy Ghost. This circumstance diminished the prejudices of the converted Jews ; and offered a boundless field for the labourers of the gospel, hitherto confined to the narrow limits of Judea. After this event, the gospel made great progress among the inhabitants of Antioch, the capital of Syria, and of all the East. The two apostles selected for the mission of the gentiles, were Barnabas and Paul. Under their direction the church of Antioch became so flourishing, in a single year, that it was styled the cradle of Christianity : it was there, that the faithful first assumed the name of Christians. (1)

(1) They were also called *FRATRES*, or Brethren, Tertul. Apol. C. 39 ; *SANCTI* or saints, Phil. 4 ; *CREDENTES* or believers, *FIDELIS* or faithful, Eph. 1. By the Jews, they were called, through contempt, *NAZARENI*. Hier. in Is. 29.

But while the gentiles were submitting with docility to the yoke of the gospel, and listening to the voice of truth, the unhappy children of Israel, were accelerating, by their stubbornness, their own ruin, and reprobation. The Roman emperors, on whom Judea depended, did not suffer them to indulge to its full extent, their fury against the Christians, whom they felt it a duty to protect, as loyal and dutiful subjects. But the rulers of the synagogue, profiting by the dispositions of Herod Antipas, the worthy grand-son of the murderer of the holy innocents, induced him to behead St. James, the son of Zebedee, and brother of John. This apostle was particularly odious to the Jews; and on account of his ardent zeal, received the surname of "Thunder." He was the first of the twelve that sealed the faith with his blood; in his sufferings he exhibited such fortitude, that his accuser was converted on the spot; and, likewise, received the crown of Martyrdom. Herod, perceiving how much his execution had gratified the sanguinary jealousy of the Jews, resolved to sacrifice to their cruelty, the head of the universal church; accordingly, Saint Peter was arrest-

ed, and loaded with chains ; but was liberated by an angel, who, irradiated with light, descended into the prison, and conducted him in safety to the house in which the disciples were assembled. The tyrant condemned the guards to death, on the ground of negligence, of which they were not guilty : and shortly after, he himself suffered the punishment which his crimes had so long deserved. This happened at Cæſarea, the theatre of his vanity. Having had some misunderstanding with the Tyrians and Sidonians, (1) he was compelled, very soon, to redeem his friendship by sequestering (2) the grain of the rich province of Galilee, on which a numerous population depended for subsistence. He was celebrating the most splendid games, in testimony of joy for the restoration of the emperor's health, when ambassadors from those nations arrived. On the second day of the solemnity, escorted by an obsequious retinue of the most distinguished Jews and Romans, he moved in triumph, to the theatre, covered with a royal mantle ; and took his seat on a throne,

(1) Acts 12.

(2) Jos. Ant. xix. 7.

sparkling with gold and jewels, and began to address the assembled multitudes; his person, of which he was extremely vain, was equal to his magnificent decorations; the people from every side exclaimed, "It is the voice of a God, and not of a man!" Herod listened with impious complacency to this profane adulation: but his triumph was momentary: he was smitten by an angel of the Lord; he writhed with internal excruciation; and shame and confusion succeeding to vanity, he sighed to his flatterers, "Behold your God about to expire!" He was carried to his palace, where he lingered five days in the greatest agony, and at length died, devoured by swarms of vermin.

Before this remarkable event, and in the second year of the reign of Claudius, who had succeeded his nephew Caligula in the year forty, the prince of the apostles transferred his pontifical see, from Antioch, to Rome; (1) and (2) from this year, (3) the forty-fourth of the Christian era, we are to date the five and twenty

(1) Orig. in Genes..

(2) Just. ap. 2.

(3) Hier. de Scrip. Ecc.

years of his pontificate assigned him by the chronicle of Eusebius. (1) He had already sat seven years, in quality of sovereign pontiff at Antioch; the first among the churches of the gentiles. He had not, however, permanently fixed his residence in any particular place: having, notwithstanding his special and pre-eminent character, carried the faith into Pontus, and many other provinces of Asia.

On his departure for the capital of the world, where he was to fix his pontifical chair, and establish his apostolic supremacy, he placed over the church of Antioch his disciple Evodius: (2)

(1) Eusub. chron. an. 44. Of this great event there can be no room to doubt, when we consider the authorities on which it is grounded. Besides the authors already quoted, we might adduce among the Latins: Tertullian, *de prescrip.* Hippolytus, *ap. Prud. in Perist.* Cyprian, *de unit. eccl.* Arnobius, *advers. gent.* Lactantius, lib. 4. c. 21. Optatus, lib. 2. cont. Parm. Among the Greeks: Papias, *ap. Euseb. 2. hist. 13.* Cælius, *ibid 2. 24.* Chrysostom, *hom. de Pet. et Paul. &c. &c.* To these may be added Severus, Prudentius, Philastrius, Orosius, Prosper, Maximus, Peter Chrysologus, Arator, Dionysius of Corinth, Peter of Alexandria, Theodoret, Sozomen, &c. &c. &c. Vide. Spond. *ad. ann. 44. x.*

(2) That Evodius was made the successor of St. Peter in the see of Antioch, appears to be disputed: the more probable opinion I have followed; I found it on the authority of Origin, (*Hom. 6. in Luc.*) Eusebius, (*in Chron. et 3 hist. 16.*) and St.

who governed that flourishing church for five and twenty years. To Rome, he took with him Mark, and many other disciples, whom he had himself instructed. Mark went from Rome, to found in the name of his master, the church of Alexandria. Such is the origin of the two first patriarchal churches: the one governed for some years by the prince of the apostles: the other founded under his auspices, by one of his own disciples. St. Mark established several other churches in Egypt; among which were many of the Therapeutæ, whom he converted, and who afterwards (1) retained their original appellation.

Jerome (de script. Eccles. in Ignat.) St. John Chrysostom, in his Homily de translato S. Ignati. relates, that the first bishop of Antioch, after S. Peter, was S. Ignatius: but Ignatius himself writing to the people of Antioch, expressly says, that Evodius first sat in the chair of Antioch, after S. Peter. Vide Spond. p. 55.

(1) Concerning the Therapeutæ, there is much doubt and obscurity: Eusebius lib. 2. Hist. Eccles. cap. 17, says that they are mentioned by Philo the Jew, and were Christians. Scaliger in his work, "De Emmendatione Morum" lib. 6, and Valesius in his notes on Eusebius lib. 2. C. 17, are of opinion that they were Jews. Perhaps it is more probable that they were, indeed, Jews, but living secluded from the world, and practising more than ordinary austerities. That they retained their original name, after their conversion, appears not to be called in question.

Before entering on his apostolic commission, St. Mark passed some time at Rome, as interpreter to St. Peter. It was there, that he wrote his gospel: in which, without confining himself to the order of time, he committed to writing what he had heard from St. Peter. Some of the fathers, from this circumstance, have attributed this gospel to the holy apostle himself. The eulogium pronounced by the Son of God on his vicar, was through humility, omitted in the gospel, while, on the contrary, it presents at full length, his threefold denial of his divine master. (1) This gospel, according to the general opinion, was written in Greek, the commercial language of all the East: and so much in use, at Rome, that even the women spoke it with facility. St. Mark, besides, translated the first-epistle of St. Peter, addressed to the faith-

(1) S. Jerome and S. Augustine were of opinion that S. Mark's gospel was written in Greek: An ancient work entitled "*de Romanis Pontificibus*," which goes under the name of S. Damasus, (but which, according to Baronius, was written by Anastasius Bibliothecarius,) affirms that St. Mark wrote in Latin: this appears to have been the common opinion of the Greeks and Syrians; which also is followed by S. Gregory of Nazianzen. Vide. S. Aug. de Conf. Evang. lib. 1. cap. 2. Hier. ad Damas. n. 123. and Greg. Naz. Com. de quat. Evang.

ful of Pontus, Bithynia, and Cappadocia. We discover in this epistle, an elevation and dignity, worthy the head of the apostles.

It was about the time when Saint Peter transferred his see to Rome, that the dispersion of the apostles, throughout the universe, took place.

Before their separation, they agreed on a symbol, or common formula of faith : which serving as a bond of unity, distinguished the faithful believers from the Jews and heretics. St. James the less, remained at Jerusalem ; of which he had been constituted the first pastor, by St. Peter ; St Andrew having preached the gospel to the Scythians, afterwards returned to Achaia, where he suffered martyrdom. He is still held in veneration by the inhabitants of the country, once peopled by the ancient Scythians. St. Philip, after having preached in Upper Asia, died at Hierapolis in Phrygia.

It is uncertain whether like the rest of the apostles, he had the honour to shed his blood for the faith which he so zealously laboured to propagate. St. Thomas carried the gospel into Parthia, and even to the Indies ; where the Por-

tuguese imagined that they had discovered his relics. St. Bartholomew exercised his zeal in Armenia Major, and in the Western parts of India. Thither he carried the gospel of St. Matthew, the first written, of which he, as well as most of the apostles made use. It was, it is thought, originally composed in Hebrew; and afterwards translated into Greek. St. Matthew preached to the Æthiopians.

St. Simon, called the Cananean, laboured in Mesopotamia and Persia. St. Jude or Thadæus carried the gospel into Arabia and Idumea. This apostle must not be confounded with a disciple of the same name, who converted Abgarus, king of Edessa. The former Thadæus or Jude, wrote the epistle, which goes under his name, and which forms a part of the canonical books. Of the labours of these illustrious envoys of the Redeemer, we can give no certain, or detailed account; and must therefore be content with the general narration transmitted to us, by the evangelical writers.

Paul and Barnabas were called by a special revelation, to the mission of the gentiles: the former, in order to adapt himself to the places

in which he preached, (they were subject to the Roman empire) having Latinized his name, (1) they set out for Paphos, and after travelling through many of the Grecian islands, and suffering a variety of hardships for the name of Jesus, returned to Antioch. Here they met with St. Peter, who had left Rome, for reasons of which we are ignorant; and it was here that St. Paul, zealously devoted to whatever could further the conversion of the gentiles, openly rebuked St.

(1) To me this seems the most probable opinion. The precise cause, however, of the change of his name, has not been ascertained. For the amusement of the reader, I may be allowed to enumerate several opinions. St. Ambrose believes that when he was baptized by Ananias, he took the name of Paul, Amb. serm. 31. edit. Rom. St. Augustine concurs in this opinion, and adds: "that he who from a proud, was converted into an humble man, forsaking the name of a proud king, assumed the appellation of Paulus, or the little: *Pauli quod idem est ac Parvi.*" Aug. tract. 72. sup. Psal. 4. S. Jerom says, that as it was customary for Roman generals to adopt the name of a conquered people, as Africanus, Asiaticus, &c.; so Saul took the name of Paul from the first distinguished gentile, whom he converted in Cyprus, viz: Sergius Paulus, the proconsul. Hier. ep. ad. Philem. S. Chrysostom, on the contrary was of opinion that that name was given him, by God himself, as that of Simon was changed, by Christ, into Peter. Chrys. de Com. Pauli. The reader may weigh these several opinions, and judge for himself. Baronius inclines in favour of that of St. Ambrose and St. Augustine. See the Dissertation in Spondan. p. 42. viii.

Peter for the repugnance which he had evinced to communicate with them. In this aversion to the gentiles, he was seconded by nearly all the faithful from Judea. In reproving St. Peter, Paul merely exercised a right, with which, as an apostle, he was vested, and which any bishop may claim, even with regard to those who hold the highest places in the hierarchy; when through mistake or inadvertency, they expose the interests of the church; and when silence would only serve to augment the evil. To the admonition of his inferior, the prince of the apostles modestly submitted; and retracted a principle which, not his own inclination, but the fear of offending the Jews, had induced him to embrace.

Of the disciples who had come from Judea, many continued untractable. The prince of the apostles quitted Antioch for Jerusalem: meanwhile, the dispute between the Jews and the gentiles, becoming every day more serious, it was agreed that the only means of terminating a difference, which must have been productive of dangerous consequences, would be to obtain a solemn decision from the apostolic college, with

Peter at its head. It was accordingly determined, that Paul and Barnabas, accompanied by a few chosen persons of the opposite opinion, should repair to Jerusalem, in order to consult the Holy Spirit; whose will, as the Saviour had promised, should be made known through the organ of the chief pastors.

In the fifty-first year of the Christian era, the first and most ancient council was convened; which has served as a model for all succeeding councils. Peter, the vicar of Jesus Christ, convoked the assembly: it consisted of all his apostolic colleagues, together with the priests and elders. Whether any of the faithful laity were present, appears doubtful: however, if there were, it is certain that they had neither a decisive voice, nor the right of judgment; for this prerogative was attached, by its divine author, exclusively to the apostolic character. The council examined the traditions, and maturely deliberated: every one was at full liberty, before the decision was given, to express, and explain, his sentiments: all evinced a perfect submission, and a readiness to observe and enforce, the ver-

dict of the council. Peter presided : (1) explained the object of the meeting : and first delivered his opinion. He reminded his brethren, how the Lord had enjoined him, after announcing the gospel in Judea, to instruct the gentiles, in the person of Cornelius ; whence he concluded : “ That it would be tempting God to impose on them a yoke, which, though retained through respect or condescension, was no longer necessary for salvation, even among the Jews themselves.” With this opinion, Paul and Barnabas coincided ; recounting what the Lord, had through their means effected in favour of the gentiles. St. James, bishop of Jerusalem, a church composed exclusively of Christians of the circumcision, not only subscribed to the liberty of the gentiles, but formally declared that such was his conviction ; and that to him it appeared strictly conformable to the sacred writings. The council expressed the same opinion : and nothing now remained, but to make known the result to the churches, in which the difference had originated. The form of the decree was accordingly

(1) Act. ap. 15.

drawn up and expressed in the following terms :
(1) “ It hath seemed good to the HOLY GHOST and to us,” to oblige you only to those observances, which we deem necessary, viz : to forbid you the use of meats, sacrificed to idols ; the blood, the flesh of strangled animals, and fornication. Although the last mentioned crime was forbidden by the law of nature, yet in consequence of the corruptions of paganism, which had so obscured the light of reason, it became almost necessary to renew the prohibition, in a formal and positive manner. The church of Antioch received with profound respect, the apostolic letters : and universal tranquillity and satisfaction ensued.

After harmony had been restored to the church of Antioch, St. Paul left his favourite city to visit the churches, which he had founded, and to ascertain, what fruits had been produced by the seed which he himself had sown. He travelled through Syria and Cilicia : it is believed, that during this journey, he associated to the ministry, his relative, St. Luke ; who, at this

(1) 1 Act. 15.

epoch, makes his appearance, for the first time, in the acts of the apostles ; of these acts, he himself is the author. He was a physician of Antioch, of some learning, and wrote more purely, than the other apostles. His affection for St. Paul was unalterable : his gospel like that of St. Mark, comprises the particulars which he had learned from his Master ; and so faithful was the copy, that the apostle, instructed by our Lord himself, after his ascension, adopted the work and refers to it in his epistles, under the appellation of his own gospel. (1)

St. Paul, having seen in a vision, a Macedonian, inviting him to preach the gospel to his countrymen, embarked at Troas, and arrived at Phillippi ; where, as we learn from the acts of the apostles, he gained over many distinguished proselytes. From Phillippi, he proceeded, af-

(1) The opinion, that S. Paul alludes to the gospel of S. Luke when he says, "according to my gospel," 1 Tim. 2 is founded on the authority of Tertullian and S. Jerome. (Tert. cont. Marc. lib. 4. Hier. de script. Eccles. in Luc.) It was to refute the fables disseminated through Greece by Cerinthus, Merinthus, and such heresiarchs, that S. Luke composed his gospel. This is the general opinion of the fathers : of S. Ambrose, venerable. Bede. S. Epiphanius, &c.

ter some stay, to Athens. This city, once the most powerful in Greece, retained few vestiges of its pristine greatness, except the cultivation of the arts, and an extraordinary thirst for the refinements of literature and philosophy. Of this place, the two leading sects were the stoics and epicureans: with these St. Paul was soon engaged in dispute. The novelty of his doctrines, and the knowledge which he displayed, excited their curiosity, as well as admiration: that they might hear him more at length, they conducted him to the Areopagus: The apostle, standing in this august assembly, which was considered the oracle of all Greece, thus addressed them: Athenians, in passing through your city, I every where observed, that your superstition distinguished you from all other nations. Noticing the several objects of your religious veneration, I found one altar having these words inscribed on it, 'TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.' What therefore you worship without knowing, that do I preach to you. He then spoke of the creation of the world; the crimes in which mankind were immersed; the general judgment and resurrection of the dead. At first, he was lis-

tened to with attention ; but when he came to speak of the resurrection of the dead, some derided his doctrine : others exclaimed that he had said enough for the present, that they would take another opportunity to hear him farther, on the same subject. We are informed of two only, who were converted on this occasion : Denis, one of the judges of the Areopagus, who afterwards became bishop of Athens, and a woman, whose name was Damaris.

Immediately after this, Paul went to Corinth ; the most flourishing city of Greece, since the decay of Athens and Lacedæmon ; and abounding with all the luxuries of life. St. Paul remained there eighteen months ; announcing the gospel in the synagogue, and to the more docile gentiles. The Jews of this city evinced such obduracy, that, according to the counsel of the Saviour, Paul shook the dust from his feet, as a testimony against them ; and from that moment, turned his whole attention to the gentiles. These afforded him great consolation ; and he continued subsisting by the labour of his own hands at Corinth ; where he wrote his epistle to the Thessalonians. This body of the faithful,

constituted one of the fairest portions of the rising church; his first epistle testifies the joy which he felt in witnessing the fervour of their faith and piety. The second epistle was written to console them for the grief they had conceived at his first letter, which they interpreted in a sense very different from that, which the apostle had intended to convey. The epistles of St. Paul are ranged in the sacred volume, according to the rank held by the churches to which they were addressed; but the two written to the Thessalonians, are the first in the order of time. To abridge them would be to diminish their beauty; and the historian can only refer those who are desirous of perusing them, to the sacred text itself.

St. Paul, having departed from Corinth, and visited many of the churches which he had founded in Asia, at length arrived at Ephesus; where he remained from the fifty-fourth, till the fifty-seventh year of the Christian era. Ephesus was the most commercial city of Asia Minor; the residence of a proconsul, and famous for the temple of Diana, whose magnificence, and pompous ceremonies attracted the attention of the

curious, from every quarter of the world. To preach the religion of the Son of God at Ephesus, was therefore to announce it the whole continent of Asia, and to all the Grecian islands. The zeal of the holy apostle was quickened at the prospect of so abundant a harvest ; he entered on this mission with his wonted courage ; preached and exercised the gift of miracles, with great success. The Ephesians were given to magic ; but all who were converted, delivered up their books on that subject, which were publicly burned, to the value of fifty thousand pieces of silver.

From this city, St. Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians. The object of which was to remove some scandals, which had found their way amongst them : he severely reproaches them with the profanation of the holy eucharist. He tells them, in the most forcible language, that they distinguished not the bread of angels from ordinary food ; and that by receiving unworthily, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, they ate and drank their “ own condemnation.” These expressions of the apostle, are so precise, so energetic, and so terrible, that he never would have

made use of them if the bread, thus profaned were not, in reality, the flesh of Jesus Christ; and it is violating all the received usages of language, to distort them into a figurative sense. Even in this fervent church which he had fostered with so much care, and "solicitude" were to be found some shameful vices, at which even the pagans themselves had reason to be scandalized. Among others, that of the incestuous man living in a criminal connexion with his father's wife, is peculiarly marked: The apostle commanded that degenerate Christian to be given over to Satan, "for the salvation of his soul;" that is, to be excluded for a time, from the communion of the faithful; so that, humbled by his fall and punishment, he might have recourse to heaven for forgiveness: and by his rigorous penance, deserve to be re-admitted among the brethren. The Christian reader is afflicted, and the infidel rejoices, at meeting with such an example of corruption in the most fervent times, and in one of the most flourishing of the apostolic churches.

But we have much more reason to be astonished at the change, which was so suddenly

effected among men, born and educated in the midst of crimes ; and at the eminent sanctity to which most of them attained, under the instructions of the great apostle of the gentiles.

This sentiment of wonder will be still more increased, if we reflect, that Corinth, at this era, presented a scene of lewdness and debauch, unparalleled in the annals of pagan history. A thousand female slaves were publicly devoted to the worship of Venus. To that impure goddess, the whole city was dedicated ; (1) and yet this reformer did not confine his instructions to the essential laws of conjugal fidelity, he conducted them to the highest perfection of virginal and Christian purity. In a word, the first epistle to the Corinthians, is a model of the most active and enlightened zeal : severity, tempered with mildness ; reproof with encouragement ; and pastoral solicitude with paternal tenderness.

But while St. Paul was thus employed in preaching the name, and diffusing the spirit of Jesus Christ, the infernal powers attempted to raise up a rival not only to the apostle, but even

(1) Strab. l. 8. Athen. l. 13.

to his adorable Master. This was the famous Apollonius Tyancæus, the most illustrious advocate of paganism and profane philosophy. His (1) birth was noble; his genius transcendant; the powers of his memory unexampled. He was skilled in all the arts and sciences of Greece, and to the embellishments of his mind were added the exterior advantages of a tall and dignified stature, and a countenance of more than human comeliness. He professed the severe philosophy of Pythagoras, and affected the most rigorous austerity of manners. With all his zeal or affected wisdom, he testified an extreme devotion to the popular worship of the gods. He came to Ephesus in the beginning of the reign of Nero, and practised a thousand crafty impositions, which the credulous multitude mistook for so many undoubted miracles. The test by which such pretended miracles can be established, is that which the Son of God himself has given us; “by their fruits, you shall know them.” Were they wrought to disseminate the truth; or to increase the blindness and follies of mankind?

(1) Philostr. l. 1. et seq.

But who can vouch for the authenticity of the facts, recorded in the life of the apostle of paganism? It was written by Damis, who associated himself to Apollonius in the East; one of those disciples, whom Lucian stigmatizes, as unworthy the least respect. Even this work is lost; and all that remains is an indigested fragment, which the sophist Philostratus gathered from hearsay, to gratify the prejudices of queen Julia, the avowed enemy of the Christian name. However, the fact may be, the prophet of idolatry was forced to yield to the apostle of Christ: and the work of the living God subsists to this day, in the very place, where, after two centuries, the name of Apollonius was forgotten.

St. Paul was at Macedonia when he heard of the good effect, produced by his first epistle to the Corinthians; he wrote them a second, to comfort them in their affliction, which his reproof had occasioned: and in consideration of his penance, absolved the incestuous man. The apostle was pleased to remit, in his favour the severity of the penitential institutions: and by this judicious clemency, to save the sinner from despair.

Some time after writing his second epistle, St. Paul revisited the church of Corinth. He spent the winter in that city, to console the children of Jesus Christ, and re-established in its perfection, their former discipline. From thence, he addressed an epistle to the Romans, while preparing to visit the faithful of Judea, with the charitable contributions which he had obtained for them, in Achaia and Macedonia. This epistle was written in Greek; and translated into Latin by Tertius. Its object was to remove the differences that had taken place between the gentiles and the Israelites. The gentiles he humbled; by showing them the pusillanimity and duplicity of their philosophers, who knowing the true God, from the light of nature, had not dared to honour him as such; and the frightful and unnatural crimes to which, in punishment of their pride, and their adherence to the follies of paganism, they had been abandoned by Almighty God. The Jews he reminded of their obstinate resistance to those heavenly favours, which had been gratuitously conferred on them: and lest they should be puffed up by the great benefits which distinguished them, as

a chosen people, from the rest of mankind, he proves to them, that these graces were to be attributed to the pure and unmerited goodness of an all-wise God, and not to the faithful observance of the old law.

It was about this same time also, that St. Paul wrote his epistle to the Galatians, a portion of the faithful, remarkable for their fervour; but whose simplicity had been imposed on by certain false teachers, the object of whose schismatical mission, was not so much to propagate the gospel as to keep up the ceremonial law, the necessity of which they ceased not to inculcate. The apostle refutes the doctrine of these seducers; and repels the calumnies which they had diffused, against his mission and apostleship.

When St. Paul perceived, from the flourishing condition of the Grecian churches, that his personal residence among them, was no longer necessary, he departed with the alms which had been collected for the faithful in Palestine. Mindful on his way, of the dangers to which his zeal for the gospel was likely to expose his beloved disciple Timothy, whom he had made bishop of Ephesus, he sent him those divine, and

evidently inspired instructions, contained in his first epistle, for the wise and prudent government of the house of God. This epistle is considered as the basis of ecclesiastical discipline. It comprehends a complete abridgment of the duties of a bishop : of those of all orders of the clergy ; and even of the different conditions among the simple faithful.

The epistle to Titus was written some time after that to Timothy : and as both were charged with the same offices, we find nearly the same instructions conveyed in each. St. Paul permits Titus to raise married men to the priesthood, on account of the difficulty of finding, especially among the Cretans, men, who had lived to an advanced age in celibacy : but he always required, that they should be the husband of only one wife : as we can find nothing in the writings of St. Paul to afford a reasonable presumption, that he had dispensed with the discipline of the church, in favour of the Cretans, we must conclude that the sacred ministers of the flock, entrusted to the care of Titus, lived with their wives, after ordination, as with their sisters ; and that, to have acted otherwise, would have

brought on them the censures and odium of the other churches.

St. Paul, even on his journey, forgot not, as St. Chrysostom remarks, the respect due to the great festivals : and accordingly repaired to Phillippi to celebrate the solemn feast of the pasch, or easter. After six days, during which the feast of the azymes, or unleavened bread, continued, he embarked with St. Luke, and arrived, in five days, at Troas ; where the faithful were expecting him, to receive his instructions and celebrate the holy mysteries. According to the narration given of his voyage by the sacred writers, we find that the faithful had already begun to sanctify the first day of the week, or Sunday. As the festival commenced on the evening of the preceding day, there was a number of lamps lighted, as well to dispel the darkness, as to add solemnity to the holy sacrifice. (1) From Troas, St. Paul proceeded to Jerusalem ; occasionally stopping to visit the churches on his way ; experiencing marks of the tenderest attachment ; and witnessing scenes of the most

(1) See Appendix to the first age.

affecting nature. The faithful clung round his neck and wept bitterly at parting with him: nothing, however, could shake the resolution which he had taken, to propagate the gospel, and suffer for the name, of Jesus Christ. His holy companions participated in the same sentiments: and he departed with them from Cæsa-rea, his last resting place, in order to reach Jerusalem before the feast of Pentecost, which he wished to celebrate in the holy city. All the faithful, with the holy bishop, St. James, at their head, received him, on his arrival; and informed him of the hatred, which his fellow citizens had conceived against him. Nothing, however, could prevent the generous apostle from visiting the several quarters of the city, and administering relief to the afflicted. He was, on all occasions, accompanied by the deputies whom he had brought with him from the Eastern churches: and among the foreign Jews who had lately come to Jerusalem, there were some Ephesians, who recognized their countryman, Trophimus, among the followers of the holy apostle. They took their resolution on the spot: and only waited a favourable moment to

carry it into execution. Meeting St. Paul in the temple, they fell upon him, and with brutal violence, dragged him out of the holy place, lest they might stain its pavement with his blood. The apostle must have sunk under their repeated blows, had not the commander of a Roman cohort, which kept guard round the temple, rescued him from their fury. The tumult increasing, the tribune caused him to be conducted to the citadel. From the steps that led to it, and which were crowded with the infuriated populace, Paul asked permission to address the people. It was granted: but such were the clamours of the fanatical multitudes below, that Lycias (this was the name of the tribune,) forced him to retire into the castle. To gratify the Jews, Lycias condemned the apostle to be scourged, and put to the torture: every thing was prepared, when Paul demanded of the centurion, who was to preside at the execution, whether it was lawful to scourge a Roman citizen? The centurion instantly went to the tribune, and informed of what Paul had said. Lycias returned, heard the saint repeat, and prove, that he was, by birth, a Roman citizen. The exe-

cutioners were alarmed; and immediately unbound the prisoner. The following day, the council of the Jews was convoked: and St. Paul, conducted by Lycias, into the midst of the assembly. He had scarcely begun to speak, when the high priest Ananias, treating the disciple as he had formerly done the master, commanded him to be struck on the face. "The Lord shall strike thee, thou whited wall," replied the apostle, not knowing him to be the high priest. But when informed of it, he repaired his involuntary fault upon the spot: and rendered to the chair of Moses, the respect which it deserved. The Saducees offended at the conclusion of Paul's discourse, relating to the future resurrection, which they disbelieved, formed a conspiracy to assassinate him; but his nephew, having informed the tribune of their intention: the apostle was sent, during the night, to Cæsarea, under a strong guard of Roman soldiers. Felix, the governor treated the holy apostle with respect: not to incur, at once, the displeasure, and expose himself to the malice of the Jews, who had followed the object of their fury from Jerusalem, he put off from day to day, the investigation

the matter. In the mean time, at the request of his wife, Drusilla, (1) he had many private conferences with St. Paul.

Drusilla, being of the Jewish religion, seemed desirous of bringing over Felix to the same belief. But when the apostle spoke of the general judgment, and painted in lively colours, the terrible chastisements, reserved for those who had infringed the sacred laws of justice, and chastity, Felix turned pale on his tribunal; and so great was his terror, that he requested St. Paul to be silent for the present, saying, that he would take another occasion to hear him. Felix resisted the first grace; and was never after converted. Two years passed; and Felix was succeeded by Portius Festus, who was immediately, solicited by the high priest Ananias, and other Jews, to send back the prisoner to Jerusalem: but St. Paul, aware of the abuse which the synagogue would make of their authority, appealed to Cæsar: his appeal was admitted by the governor: and nothing now remained, but

(1) Drusilla had divorced her legitimate husband, Asis, king of Emesa, and married Felix, who, though a mere plebeian, was honoured with the confidence of the emperor.

to transfer the prisoner to Italy. St. Luke who had always accompanied him, and Aristarchus of Thessalonica, one of the deputies, who brought the contributions made in Greece and Asia, for the relief of the faithful in Judea, who had associated himself to St. Paul, with singular fidelity, embarked with the suffering apostle. The passage was long, and tempestuous: St. Paul earnestly advised the commander of the vessel, to discontinue, for a time, the voyage; his advice was scorned; but they soon had reason to repent it. A violent storm arose: the heavens, for several days, were shrouded in dark clouds: the sea was unusually agitated: and after throwing overboard the merchandise, they were compelled to abandon the vessel to the mercy of the waves. Whilst they were thus oscillating between life and death, the Lord revealed to his servant, that the vessel should be lost; but none on board should perish: the prediction animated the spirits of the desponding crew. It was verified soon after by the safe arrival of the passengers, (the vessel having been cast away) on the island of Malta. The Maltese, sympathising with their misfortunes, kindled a fire to warm

their frozen limbs : St. Paul, whose benevolence and charity were ever active, was gathering faggots, when a viper, concealed under them, fastened on his hand, and remained suspended. The islanders, feeling that horror for guilt, which is impressed, by the law of nature, on the heart of every human creature, and which nothing can efface, imagined that he was some criminal wretch whom the vengeance of heaven pursued, even after his escape from shipwreck. St. Paul shook the viper into the flames : while they expected each moment, to see him swell and fall dead before them. But such not being the consequence, passing from one extreme to another, they imagined that he was a God. Publius, one of the most distinguished men of the island, dwelt near the spot where this extraordinary circumstance had taken place : wishing to entertain the friend of heaven, he invited him to his house ; and, during three days, left nothing undone to relieve his necessities, and those of his companions : his generous hospitality was not left unrewarded : St. Paul restored to health and vigour, the father of Publius, who had been reduced to the last extremity, by a dysentery, and

a burning fever. The fame of the miracle soon spread through the whole island: and multitudes of sick persons collected round the apostle; all of whom he healed, without distinction. These miraculous cures, while they disposed the hearts of the islanders to receive the faith, greatly enhanced the authority and credit of the apostle, almost on the confines of Italy. The end of their voyage was as prosperous as its commencement had been unfortunate: the apostle landed at Puzzoli, in the territory of Naples, with the view of prosecuting the remainder of his journey by land. By the Christian inhabitants, he was welcomed with the liveliest demonstrations of respect, and affection: many of them accompanied him even to his journey's end: and their numbers increased, the nearer he approached the place of his destination.

The faithful of the city of Rome, filled with gratitude for the letters which they had received from him, and the happy effects they had produced, came out to meet him; some the distance of thirty, others even of fifty leagues. Thus, about the beginning of May, in the year 59, he arrived, in a kind of triumph, at the capital of

the empire ; the see of the head of the church : and the metropolis of the whole Christian world.

It was customary, at Rome, to allow certain prisoners the liberty of the city, at least during the night, but chained and watched by a soldier ; this favour was not refused to St. Paul : he passed two years in this manner. He was not desirous of farther libery, than was necessary for the preaching of the gospel. We find, on the contrary in the different epistles which he addressed to the faithful from Rome, that he esteemed himself happy in his chains, provided he could labour in the propagation of the true religion. After convening an assembly of the principal Jews, dwelling in the city, he informed them of the nature of his appeal to Cæsar, and convinced them, that in taking this necessary step, nothing was more foreign from his intentions, than to injure the Jewish nation, or even the most undeserving of his brethren. They admitted his justification : and requested him to appoint a day for the discussion of their religious differences. To this he cheerfully consented : on the appointed day, he treated the question of the Redeemer's coming ; analysed,

and expatiated on the several prophecies relating to Jesus of Nazareth, at such length, that his discourse continued from morning till evening. Of the Jews many were converted: but the greater number grew only the more obstinate; this induced St. Paul to take the resolution to extend the light of truth to those, who were more disposed to profit by it. He did so: and proselytes, without number, were added to the communion of the faithful. It is to the evangelist St. Luke, we are indebted for this information concerning the apostle of the gentiles.

In the acts of the apostles, he dwells with peculiar complacency, on the labours of his Master: the Holy Ghost, by whom the Sacred Narrative was inspired, left our curiosity, respecting the other apostles, unsatisfied; presenting in the person of St. Paul, abundant matter for instruction and imitation. As for St. Luke himself, he preached the faith in Gaul, Italy, and Macedonia, passed his whole life in celibacy, and died at the age of eighty-four years, in Achaia.

The Jews, disappointed in their attempts on the life of St. Paul, in the city of Jerusalem, directed their fury against St. James, the bishop

of that city, and in the interval between the departure of Festus, and the arrival of his successor Albinus, the priests and leading men summoned St. James before the Sanhedrim. Ananus, son of the infamous Annas, and brother-in-law to Caiphas, was the master-spring of this resolution: To compass, more effectually, their object, they, at first, extolled the virtues of the holy bishop, and so great, indeed, was his merit, and so universal his reputation, that he was surnamed the "just," and the "supporter of the people." In consideration of the purity of his life, he was allowed to enter into that part of the temple, whither the priests alone were admitted, when in the actual exercise of their functions: he prayed without intermission; and, almost always, with his face prostrate on the earth; so that his forehead, as well as his knees, were, as the ancient writers inform us, "callous as the camel's skin." To this angelic fervour, were united a virginal integrity of manners, and rigorous austerities; he never drank wine, nor other inebriating liquors; never entered the bath; nor made use of animal food: his garments were exclusively of linen, and these so

light, as neither to defend him from the burning rays of a summer sun, nor the piercing cold of winter. When he appeared in the assembly, the people redoubled their professions of respect: his opinion of the doctrine of Jesus was demanded: he expressed his conviction, and defended the religion of the Son of God, with such undaunted courage, that by his zeal, he converted many foreign Jews, who had assembled to celebrate the pasch.—The scribes, pharisees, and Saducees, excited a violent sedition; and, insisting that he should publicly retract his opinion, and disabuse the people of their errors concerning Jesus Christ, they conducted the holy confessor to an elevated part of the temple. The multitude from below, cried out, with a great, perhaps exaggerated, appearance of respect: “Just man, what is your belief concerning Jesus, who was crucified?” There could not have been a more favourable opportunity to declare the truth. How far the holy man took advantage of it, his answer will decide: “Why, said he, with a loud voice, do you ask me concerning Jesus, the Son of Man, and, at the same time, Son of God? In vain do you pretend to

doubt my faith, in this true Redeemer; I declare unto you; that he is sitting in the heavens, at the right hand of the Almighty; from whence he shall come to judge the universe." By some, a cry of "Glory to the Son of David" was raised, as he pronounced these words; others, on the contrary, exclaimed: "The just man himself has erred: and the holy apostle and venerable bishop was precipitated amid the confusion, to the ground. By the fall he was not instantly killed; but as he was praying for his enemies, after the example of his Divine Master, a fuller, deprived him of the last remnant of life, by striking him on the head with a mallet. The holy martyr was buried on the spot which was stained with his blood: and a monument erected to his memory, of which one pillar was standing, as we are informed by Eusebius, in the fourth century.

St. James, wrote an epistle, addressed to the faithful, converted from the different tribes of Israel, and spread throughout the whole world: on this account, it has received the name of CATHOLIC or universal: in his time some passages from the epistles of St. Paul, misunder-

stood, had given rise to the erroneous doctrine, that good works were not necessary for salvation: the first object of this epistle was to combat and refute that principle of relaxation, and corruption: he also gives a most precise idea of the sacrament of extreme unction. The heretics, called sacramentarians, as well as those who maintained that faith, without good works, is sufficient for salvation, for some time, rejected this epistle from the number of canonical books: but the power of truth compelled them, after a short time, to reinstate it among the sacred writings: a doubt, it is true, was at first entertained, respecting the author of it; but we find it cited as one of the inspired writings, by all the holy doctors, at the close of the fourth century, and by those who came after them; and if, in the preceding ages, it had not been held by all, in equal esteem, it was only because the doubt concerning its authenticity, had not been set at rest. (1)

(1) That this epistle was ultimately considered canonical by the whole church, is manifest from the writings of Eusebius, (Hist. 22. in fin.) S. Jerome, de script. Eccles. in Jacob. Tertullian, (adv. Jud. c. 2.) and Origen (ho. 7 in Jos.) To these

The same may be said of the epistle of St. Jude: like that of St. James, it was addressed to all the faithful in general; and was directed against the same errors, which were every day becoming more prevalent: that is, the corrupt principles of the Nicholaïtes, the Simonians and Gnostics, who were satisfied with a barren and speculative, and denied the necessity of a lively and active, faith.

St. James, St. Jude, and St. Simeon, were brothers, and cousin-germans, to our Lord according to the flesh; they were still more closely united to him, in a spiritual sense, by their extraordinary virtues. Simeon, after the death of his brother, was raised to the see of Jerusalem: and notwithstanding the malevolent exertions of the Jews, the episcopal ministry was triumphantly continued, in the very capital of Judea.

In the mean time, St. Paul not only maintained at Rome, his ascendancy over the Jews, but acquired great celebrity even in the court of

may be added the authority of S. Epiphanius, S. Athanasius, S. Gregory Nazianzen, Pope Damasus, S. Augustine, Cassiodorus, S. Isidore, and in a word, of all who have since written on the subject. Vide. Baron. ad ann. 63.

Nero, and modelled into sincere and fervent Christians, some of the ministers of that voluptuous emperor. In his letter to the Philippians, (who, on hearing of the imprisonment of St. Paul, had sent their bishop Epaphroditus, to Rome, with presents to the holy apostle,) he commends the docility with which they listened to the voice of truth : their respect for its teachers ; and the spirit of charity, which the gospel had diffused amongst them. After having informed the Christians at Phillippi, of the progress of the faith, not only in the pagan city, but in the imperial palace itself, he fortifies them against false teachers and seducers, whom he calls "enemies of the cross of Christ." These enemies of the cross, were the hardened Jews, and some few heretics, such as Simon, the magician, and perhaps the apostate Cerinthus, who maintained that Christ had been crucified only in appearance : this is the reason why that eloquent epistle exalts, with such sublimity, the great mystery of redemption by the cross. In this letter, we begin to be acquainted with the virtues of St. Clement : his attachment to the doctrine and person of the apostle ; and with all

those rare and excellent qualities which afterwards raised that illustrious man to the chair of Peter. In the epistle to Philemon we are informed of the conversion of Onesimus : who, from a fugitive slave became one of the most illustrious converts of St. Paul, during his captivity. Onesimus had belonged to a Christian, by the name of Philemon ; an inhabitant of Colossus, in Phrygia ; a man distinguished for his piety : and who, a few years later, under the reign of Nero, was crowned with martyrdom. Paul, in chains, advanced the interests of the church, by the superior talents of this penitent slave ; and made him the bearer of two letters : the one to Philemon, the other to the church of the Colossians. The former epistle, short as it is, is a master piece of eloquence, flowing from the abundance of an inspired heart. It produced the desired effect. The master of Onesimus, not only pardoned, but emancipated his slave ; and sent him back to the apostle. Under the direction of such a teacher, Onesimus made rapid progress in virtue and perfection, and became one of the ornaments of the church, in its purest and brightest times.

In the epistle to the citizens of Colossus, he dwells, with equal force and dignity, on the greatness of the power of Jesus Christ: for there were, in this city, false teachers; who maintained that God should not be addressed through Jesus Christ, (as he is so far above us,) but through the angels. In the third chapter, he enforces the necessity of true and unaffected piety: and gives an excellent abridgment of all the duties of a Christian life. Among the disciples of whom, the apostle makes mention, we find the name of Mark, cousin of Barnabas, who had formerly been an associate in the labours of St. Paul. St. Mark, had imbibed the evangelical spirit of his teacher: and so great were his zeal, constancy and fervour, that we find him numbered with the three principal co-operators of the apostle of the gentiles.

That the epistle to the Ephesians, was written from Rome about the same time, and sent by the same opportunity, is highly probable: for the ordinary road to Colossus, ran through the city of Ephesus. As these two churches were in the same country, their wants similar, and their manners congenial, the instructions

conveyed, are in substance the same. One point, however, we discover in the epistle to the Ephesians, which is not mentioned in that to the Colossians: I allude to marriage, as raised to the dignity of a sacrament. The sacred writer not only speaks in commendation of matrimony, but even compares the union of husband and wife, to that of Jesus Christ with his church.

From Rome, he also wrote his epistle to the Hebrews; that is, to the converted Jews of Palestine: to strengthen them against the seductive attempts, or envy of the other Jews. Although the gentiles constituted the special object of the mission of St. Paul, yet he embraced all the world in his unbounded charity: In writing to the Jews, he endeavours to disabuse them of their attachment to circumcision, and to convince them of the inutility of the law of Moses, whose types were all realized in the religion of Jesus Christ. To accomplish this, with more efficacy, he insists upon the superabundant virtue of the sacrifice of the incarnate word, and the pre-eminence of his priesthood, and shows how the multiplied sacrifices of the ancient law, having no longer any effect to produce, were

therefore rendered void and unnecessary. Of the authenticity of this epistle, some doubts have been entertained, on account of the remarkable dissimilitude of style between it and the other writings of St. Paul; but of this, the cause is obvious: St. Paul was writing to a church, in which there were numerous proselytes from Judaism, who though converted, could not lay aside the prejudices which they had conceived against his person. It may be through fear of offending these, that he did not, according to his usual custom, prefix his name to the epistle.

The substance, notwithstanding the difference of expression, speaks the nervous and dignified manner of the great teacher of the gentiles. (1)

(1) The authenticity of this epistle was denied by the Marcionites, and Arians; by some it was attributed to Barnabas; by others to S. Clement, or S. Luke. The grounds on which they rejected it, were as I remarked in the text: 1. Because the name of Paul is not expressed: 2. On account of the dissimilitude of style, between this and the other writings of S. Paul.

I. To the first objection S. Clement, (ap. Eus. 6. h. 11.) S. Jerome, (de script. Ecc.) and others, give the answer which the reader saw above: as he was sent more especially to the gentiles, he did not style himself the apostle of the Hebrews.

II. As to the dissimilitude of style, the cause of it is obvious: his other epistles being directed to the Greeks, were written in

St. Luke soon after the publication of this epistle, departed, for a time, from the city of Rome: and this is the reason why the acts of the apostles, do not continue to the time, when St. Paul after two years of imprisonment obtained his freedom.

In following the order of the sacred writings, we find that St. Paul, soon after this event, fulfilled the promise which he had made, in his epistle to visit the Hebrews: after which he went to the different churches of Asia Minor, and extended still more widely the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

In the discharge of his duties, during these zealous excursions, he suffered many hardships, privations, and trying persecutions; his health was now extremely weakened, by excessive labour, and though, only sixty years old, he was bending under a premature decrepitude. Having learned by a special revelation, as we are informed by St. Athanasius, that he was to suf-

the Greek language: That to the Hebrews, he wrote in the Hebrew tongue: that it was translated into Greek either by S. Luke or S. Clement, was the common opinion of the ancients. (Orig. ap. Eus. 6 hist. 19.) (Eus. 3 Hist. 32 et alii.) Thus Spondanus ep. an. Baron. ad. ann. 60.

for martyrdom at Rome, far from being terrified at the idea of death, he hastened back to the second "Babylon" which was soon to be stained with the blood of the saints. Then it was that St. Paul met at Rome for the last time, the prince of the apostles, whose pastoral duties, even after the establishment of the apostolic chair, had often caused him to absent himself from the great metropolis.

It is certain, that after the translation of the holy see, the vicar of Jesus Christ, made frequent excursions into the East, and even as far as Palestine. We are assured by the sacred writings, that he presided at the council of Jerusalem, after that event: and by some it has been conjectured, that he travelled into Judea, to consecrate St. Simeon bishop of Jerusalem, after the martyrdom of St. James. On his return to his see, he was warned that the period of his immolation was drawing nigh, and even in the manner foretold by Jesus Christ, during his mortal life.

He took advantage of the short time which was yet allotted him, to transmit in writing, to the faithful Israelites, those lessons, which they had before received, with docility and gra-

titude, from him, who was, in a peculiar manner, their apostle. In his epistles, he warned them against the false doctrine, which began to be disseminated: reminding many, that they had been eye witnesses of the miracles and ascension of the Redeemer. To St. Peter, are attributed several prophecies which it is said he published in concert with St. Paul, before their martyrdom: that in these were predicted all the eventful circumstances of the ruin of Jerusalem: and that on hearing them the faithful abandoned in time, the devoted city.

The holy apostles, it would appear, had now consummated their mission: Peter had courageously preached the necessity of justice, and chastity to the flatterers of the most sanguinary and impure of the Cæsars; and Paul, having converted the chief cup-bearer, and one of the concubines of the emperor, was by the ferocious tyrant, indignantly consigned to a dungeon. But their zeal and solicitude were still active. During his (1) imprisonment, which continued a year, Paul, though treated at first with the ut-

(1) Chrys. in Vitup. Mon. Ambr. in Aux.

most rigour, had found means to put the last stroke to the work of his ministry. He wrote his second epistle to Timothy, to inspire him with fresh courage in the discharge of his various functions, and to request his presence in the imperial city, to comfort the faithful in the affliction which his approaching death, and that of St. Peter, would necessarily cause.

This epistle furnishes, besides, one of the strongest proofs in favour of tradition: "The things, says the apostle, which thou hast heard of me before many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also." Here we find, that besides the written word, there were truths no less certain and salutary, to be transmitted by word of mouth, from generation to generation, to the end of time. This epistle is the last which St. Paul wrote: in it we clearly discover a peculiar force, and ardour of zeal, excited in the breast of the holy apostle, by his approaching martyrdom. This event was accelerated by the arrival of Simon the magician, at Rome. This enthusiast had easily insinuated himself into the corrupt heart of Nero: who himself pretended to be skilled in

the art of magic. To gratify the puerile curiosity of the emperor, Simon undertook to fly to heaven, (1) and occupy (2) the throne which was there prepared (3) for him. (4) An immense multitude assembled, to witness the scene: and among others, the two apostles made their appearance on the occasion; having previously prepared themselves for the combat against the prince of darkness, by fasting, and the prayers of the faithful. Simon Magus appeared: and after publicly declaring himself the rival of Jesus Christ, whose ascension he denied, he gradually mounted into the air above the wondering multitude. But his triumph was momentary: he rose to fall: and on a sudden he tumbled from his elevation; and his limbs were broken: he was instantly conveyed to a neighbouring house, but ashamed to survive so public a disgrace, he precipitated himself from a window, and died upon the spot.

This event rekindled all the hatred and jealousy of Nero, against the holy apostles. He ordered them both to be thrust into the prison

(1) Arnob. in. gent. l. 2. (2) Cyril. Catech 6. (3) Suet. hist. l. 2. (4) Aug. hæ. 1.

of Mamertinus, at the foot of the capitoline hill, and condemned them to die. The sentence was (1) executed by the Roman governors, in the absence of the emperor, who had left Rome on an expedition into Greece. St. Peter, no longer the pusillanimous man who denied his Divine Master, suffered with immoveable courage: He was crucified according to the prediction of the Redemer: but requested through humility, and obtained, the favour of hanging with his head towards the ground, for he esteemed himself unworthy to be assimilated even in his torments to the Son of God. Death, by crucifixion, could not be inflicted on St. Paul, who was a Roman citizen; he was accordingly beheaded, on the same day. Their martyrdom occurred on the twenty-ninth day of June; and most probably in the sixty-ninth year of Jesus Christ. St. Paul was executed about the distance of three miles from Rome, at a place called "*The Sal-
vian fountains.*" (2) St. Peter was crucified on mount Janiculum; but his body was entombed in the vatican. The faithful had the precaution

(1) Clem. ep. ad cor.

(2) Eus. xix 18.

to have the portraits of the holy apostles taken before their death; and these were carefully preserved for more than two centuries at Rome. St. Peter was represented of low stature: his head bald, and having an aquiline or Roman nose. These particulars of the vicar of Jesus Christ, cannot but prove interesting to the reader. His wife (he had been married before his vocation to the apostleship,) suffered martyrdom before him: and Petronilla, his daughter, lived a virgin, and died at Rome, in the odour of sanctity.

Such were the first victims of the persecution of Nero; a persecution the more fatal, as it served as a model to those of the succeeding ages; but infinitely advantageous to the church of Rome, where, by the death of the vicar of Jesus Christ, the apostolic supremacy was established for ever.

APPENDIX

TO CHAPTER I.

I PURPOSE to lay before the reader, by way of appendix to the first chapter, some of the practices and customs, of the first Christians. To the primitive times, we cannot but recur with a reverential sense : and it is gratifying, as well as consoling to discover, that the practices of the first, are still respected and some even continued in the ~~eighteenth~~ century.

II. The ecclesiastical offices were divided into various grades; according to the demands of the churches. These grades are called ORDINES, not only by the ancient writers, but also in the Testament : to mark the distinction between the clergy and the laity. As not only among the Jews, but among the pagans, a line of demarcation was drawn between things sacred and profane, the same distinction was also observed in the church; It was first established by Jesus

Christ himself, when he selected twelve apostles and seventy-two disciples from the multitude: and afterwards by the apostles when they ordained bishops, presbyters, and deacons. And though of these grades alone, mention is made in the New Testament, yet that other orders were also instituted by the apostles, cannot be called in question. For this, we have the testimony of S. Ignatius, Denis the Areopagite, and Clemens Ramanus. The first author makes mention of presbyters, deacons, sub-deacons, lectors, chanters, door-keepers, labourers, and exorcists. (1)

Of these grades, he not only mentions the names, but the duties. ~~From~~ of his epistles, (2) he speaks of choosing a CURSOR, whose office, was to carry letters from the bishops to the churches. This office afterwards devolved on the lectors, acolytes, and sub-deacons. (3) Of the labourers, the office was, as S. Epiphanius testifies, (4) to bury the dead: They were called also fossarii, or diggers. (5) The orders

(1) Ign. Ep. ad Antioch. (2) Ep. ad Polycarp. (3) Cyp. Ep. 24. and 50. (4) Epiph. in Comp. (5) Ep. ad Rust. Narb. ap. Hier. to. 9.

distinct from these ecclesiastical offices, were seven in number, viz: door keepers, lectors, exorcists, acolytes, sub-deacons, deacons and presbyters; all of them with the exception of the acolytes, are mentioned by Ignatius: the acolytes, however, are mentioned by Gelasius. (1) (2) (3) All are enumerated in the Roman council held under Sylvester, (4) and the fourth council of Carthage. (5) The institution of sacred orders, is called, not only by the more recent, but by the most ancient fathers, a sacrament. (6) (7) (8.) The ceremonies by which this sacrament was conveyed, are shadowed out (9) by S. Luke, when he shews that the ordination of Paul and Barnabas was preceded by *fasting* and *prayer*: after which the ordination was consummated by the *imposition of hands*: that the Holy Ghost was given by the imposition of hands, was not a secret to Simon Magus, since he attempted to purchase it by money. The

(1) Ep. ad Epis. Lucan. C. 3 and hist. 77 de relig. et seq.
 (2) Ap. Euseb. (3) Ep. 55. (4) Conc. Rom. (5) Can. 2. con carth. (6) see Tertull. de præscrip. C. 40. (7) Cypr. de ablut. ped. (8) Aug. 2. cont. Parm. 13. de bon. conjug. 24.
 (9) Acts. 3.

ceremony of imposing hands was derived from the ancient Testament; as appears from Exod. 26.

Besides deacons, there were also deaconesses. Of these, the primitive office was similar to that of the door-keepers: The latter opened the door for the men; the former for the women. Whence they are called by Ignatius *guards of the sacred vestibules*. (1) Afterwards, they assumed other occupations, teaching, visiting sick women, washing, &c. &c. It is certain that they did not receive the imposition of hands. For the council of Nice numbers them among the laity: (2) Besides deaconesses, there were also presbyteræ or priestesses: so called, either because they presided over the deaconesses, or on account of their age; or because they assumed their name from their husbands, who were chosen to be presbyters; and afterwards lived in continency (3) (4) (5.)

III. From the epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, it is manifest that there were in the times of the apostles, places called churches, in

(1) Ep. ad Antioch. (2) Can. 19. (3) Conc. Laod. C. ult. (4) Athan. ad virg. (5) Conc. Ter. 2 c. 20. &c.

which the Christians assembled to pray. Of this the writings of S. Ignatius bear testimony: (1) those places were called **CHURCHES**, first by the apostle, and afterwards by all. (2) They were originally private houses: but edifices were afterwards erected, as appears from the edict issued by the pagan emperors, to demolish them. (3) Eusebius also relates that the churches which had been erected long before the reign of Dioclesian, and had fallen to ruin or been destroyed, were rebuilt by the Christians. The word *church* taken in this sense, is frequently mentioned by Tertullian. (4) And before his days, it is known from the acts of Pudens, a Roman senator, and disciple of St. Peter, that his house, as also that of Euprepia, a matron, were converted into churches. (5) Evaristus, the fifth pontiff, after S. Peter, divided the church among the presbyters. (6)

The churches were so situated, that they faced the East; as is evident from Clement, (7)

(1) Ign. ep. 6. 11. 23. (2) Aug. qu. sec. 59. citatur a Bed. in 1 Cor. (3) Euseb. lib. 8. (4) de Cor. Mil. C. 3 &c. &c. (5) Act Pud. et ep. Pii P. P. ad Just. (6) Anast. de Rom. Pont. (7) 2 Cons. 62.

Tertullian, (1) and Paulinus. (2) Either in imitation of Solomon's temple, which, as Aristeas testifies, looked towards the East; (3) or because the Christians were accustomed to pray towards the East. Each church had its portico, atrium, sancta, and sancta sanctorum: the first was assigned to penitents and others, who were not admitted into the church: the second to the people, the third to the priests, and the last set apart for the celebration of the sacred mysteries. This form of structure was observed as well in the East, as in the West; as appears from Eusebius, (4) Gregory Nazianzen, &c. &c. (5) There were, besides, rooms which are now called chapels, and *pastophorii* or *secretaria*, which were similar to our sacristies.

In every church, near the door, there was a fountain: in which the faithful were accustomed to wash their hands and faces, according to the admonition of the apostle. (6) (7) (8) Each church was decorated with an image of the Redeemer, as we learn from the seventh canon of

(1) Advers. Valent. C. 2. (2) Paul ep. 12 ad Sever. (3) Arist. de 72 Intrep. (4) 10 hist. 4. et in vitCon. (5) Orat. in fun. patr. (6) 1 Tim. 2. (7) Clem. 8. (8) Const. 38.

the council of Antioch, cited in the Nicene council. (1) Eusebius testifies that he saw the images of Christ, as also of Peter and Paul, which had been painted long before his time, (2) and Tertullian says, that it was customary to have the image of Christ, representing the good shepherd, impressed on the sacred chalices. (3)

That ornaments and precious vases of gold and silver were used in the primitive churches S. Optatus, and S. Augustine bear witness. (4) (5) Pope Urban, who lived before them, used none but silver vases. (6)

IV. The custom of assembling together, and receiving the blessed eucharist in the church is of the remotest antiquity. (7) The rite observed in receiving the sacrament was established by Paul himself, in the church of Corinth: though on the particular ceremonies, S. Luke is silent. S. Augustine testifies that they were handed down by tradition. (8)

Wine mixed with water was offered in the cha-

(1) 2 Act. 1. (2) 7. hist. 14. (3) Tertull. de pudic. cap. 6. et 10. (4) Opt. lib. Cont. Parm. (5) Aug. 3. Cont. Crescon. 29. (6) Anast. de Rom. Pont. (7) 1 Cor. 1. (8) Aug. ep. 118. ad Jan.

lice. (1) (2) It was offered and taken by persons *fasting*. (3) (4) (5) It was offered for the *living and the dead*. The blessed sacrament was kept on the altar, in a golden dove, as we read in the acts of S. Basil. And though, in the churches, the faithful received under both kinds, it is certain that in their private houses and when they received in the church, otherwise than in the time of the sacrifice, they received *only under one kind*. (6) Concerning the prayers, hymns, and sacred conferences, which attended these holy banquets; the sobriety and modesty, and mutual charity, which were observed, (7) Minutius Felix, Clement of Alexandria, (8) and others have left the plainest and most incontrovertible testimonies. Hence these banquets were called AGAPES, that is, feasts of *love*.

These banquets were according to S. Gregory, of Nazienzen, (9) celebrated on three

(1) Cyp. ep. 63 ad Cæcil. (2) Just. apol. ad. Anton. (3) Aug. ep. 118. (4) Cyp. ep. p. 3. (5) Tertull. ad. uxor. 1 8. c. 3. (6) Ana. Sin. de Sac. Syn. (7) vid. Baron. ad an. 57. XLIV. see Tertullian, apol. C. 19. (8) Minut. in Oct. (9) Clem. 2 pædag. 12.

principal occasions: on birth-days; funerals, and marriages. Besides these, they might be celebrated also in the dedication of churches; as appears from S. Gregory Pope. (1)

III. Before receiving the sacred body and blood of Christ, the faithful were accustomed to purify their hearts, by a confession of their sins. They were aware that the power of forgiving sins had been conferred on the apostles: and that it was only by confessing, that they could obtain pardon for their sins. That this was the universal practice of the primitive Christians, is manifest from the writings of the most ancient fathers; such as S. Irenæus, Dionysius, &c. From Eusebius we learn, that the heretic Natalius made his confession to pope Zephyrinus. (2) This confession was called *exomolegesis*: that *exomolegesis* was the same as confession, is manifest from Tertullian, S. Cyprian, and others. *Exomolegis*, says the former, *est petitio veniæ, quia qui petit veniam, delictum confitetur*. (3) The latter declares that the “fallen” are not to

(1) Greg. 1 ep. 54. (2) Eus. 5. hist. 26. (3) de orat. C. 6.

be received back into the church, without making an *exomolegesis*. (1)

It must not be thought, that it meant only a public confession of sins. From Tertullian and Origen, it is clear, that it meant secret confession also. (2) (3) Of the necessity of confession, we have innumerable testimonies; such as S. Basil, S. Gregory of Nyssa, both Anastasii, Nicephorus, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, pope Celestine, and all who afterwards treated of ecclesiastical affairs, as well Greeks as Latins.

That there were, during the persecution of Decius, *presbyteri pœnitentarii*, whose office was to hear the private confessions of the faithful, is manifest from Socrates and Sozomon. (4) (5) It is probable that these *pœnitentarii*, were instituted before the reign of Decius: but on account of the great number of those who fell during the persecution the number of *pœnitentarii*, became also augmented. That not one alone, but several of these were placed in the same church, appears from the epistle of Dio-

(1) Cyp. de laps. 1. (2) Tertull. de lap. c. 20. (3) Orig. hom. 2. in psal. 38. (4) Socr. lib. 5. c. 19. (5) Sozom. l. 7. c. 16.

nysius of Alexandria, to Fabius of Antioch. (1)

IV. When a member of the christian community, proved publicly scandalous and incorrigible, he was expelled from the pale of the church: this expulsion was called excommunication. The reader saw, when treating of the epistle to the Corinthians, that St. Paul excommunicated the incestuous man. That the unfortunate was not only possessed and tormented by the evil spirit, but also cut off from the body of the church, all the fathers agree: (2) (3) (4) St. Paul, in like manner, delivered over to Satan, Alexander and Hymenæus, who had apostatized from the faith. Writing to the Galatians, he pronounces anathema against all who broach new doctrines, (5) a similar mode of excommunication was in use among the Jews: and Josephus testifies that it was severely inflicted among the Essenians. (6) Among the Romans, and other pagan nations, incorrigible persons were devoted to Pluto, and the infernal deities: (7) among the Gauls, whoever did not obey the de-

(1) ap. Euseb. 9. hist. 29. (2) Amb. 1 de pæn. 14. (3) Aug. de fid et op c. 26. (4) Tertull. de pud. 13. 20. (5) Gal. 1. (6) Jos. 2. de bell. (7) Dionys. Italic lib. 2. hist. Rom.

crees of the druids, were excluded from the sacrifices, and forbidden to hold any communication with their fellows. (1)

Excommunication is mentioned by the fathers, under different appellations: by Tertullian it is styled *DIVINA CENSURA*: (2) by S. Cyprian, sometimes *ABSTENTIO*, at other times *GLADIUS SPIRITUALIS*, a spiritual sword: (3) by St. Jerome, *SPIRITUALIS MUCRO*, and *VIRGA FERREA*, or an iron rod. (4)

Whoever fell under this censure, was deprived of the holy eucharist: and rejected from the assemblies of the faithful. (5) They were said to be given up to Satan; first, because such was the form used by St. Paul: and secondly, because the obdurate sinner is the enemy of God, and the captive of the infernal powers.

Besides excommunication, there was also another censure, called *DEGRADATIO*, *EXAUCTORATIO*, or *DEPOSITIO*: which was inflicted on the minister of the church, when guilty of an enormous crime. By it, he was deposed as well from his

(1) Cræes. de bell. Gal. lib. 6. (2) Tertull. apol. C. 39. (3) Cyp. ep. 38 et 62. (4) Hier. ep. 1 et 53. (5) Cyp. de orat. Dom.

office, as from his order. Similar to this was the censure of *SUSPENSIO*: which was incurred by the minister, who presumed to officiate, without due faculty from the bishop. (1) This censure was very common: (2) by it, the name of the delinquent was expunged from the registers of the church; or at least, if the minister were only suspected, suppressed; in order that it might not be called over in public with the others.

V. The incestuous man was, after a short penance, absolved by the apostle: in virtue of this example, the church claimed, and exercised, the right of granting indulgences: of this, we find numerous instances in the primitive ages: especially in the time of persecution, when the fallen returned to the church, made their exomologesis or confession, and were dispensed from a part of the penance which they otherwise would have been obliged to undergo. In the great council of Nice, we find a canon authorising the bishops, according to the contrition

(1) Cep. ep. 65 ad Rogat. (2) Aug. ep. 136. 137.

which the penitent evinces, to grant indulgences. (1)

VI. The practice of abstaining from meat, on certain days, claims the dignity of an apostolical institution: of the abstinence of the apostles, many examples might be adduced: By S. Gregory Nazianzen, we are informed that Peter was accustomed to satisfy his hunger with *herbs*. (2) Hegesippus affirms, that James, the brother of our Lord, never used flesh or wine: (3) That Matthew abstained from flesh, is asserted by Clement of Alexandria: (4) That Timothy was not in the habit of drinking wine is plain from S. Paul.

That the Christians were, at certain times, prohibited the use of flesh, and bound to fast, is evident from many testimonies: S. Ignatius, who was contemporary with the apostles, and of whose epistles no doubt was entertained, zealously recommends the fast of *lent*: (QUADRAGESIMÆ) that this great fast was an apostolic institution, was never questioned in the church: Tertullian says, that the fast of lent, (he called

(1) Can. 11. 12. (2) de am. paup. (3) ap. Eua. 2 hist. 22.
(4) 2 pædag. 1.

it the easter fast, *PASCHATIS*,) was prescribed as well by the scripture, as by tradition: (1) S. Basil declares, that that solemn fast was proclaimed on land and sea, that the whole world might observe it.

Besides the quadragesimal fast, we find, in the most ancient authors, that also of the four seasons. "*Quatuor temporum*." So distributed, says S. Leo, that during the revolution of the year, the law of abstinence may be observed at every change of season. (2) That this fast also took its origin in the days of the apostles, the same author proves beyond a doubt: that it was observed in the Greek, as well as in the Latin church, Athanasius intimates, when treating of the fast after pentecost. (3)

VII. The observance of the Sunday, in the place of Saturday, derives its origin also from the apostles: Ignatius, their contemporary, mentions it: (4) That *COLLECTS* or collections were made on Sunday, we learn from Cyprian, Chrysostom, Leo, and others. By Ignatius, it is styled, *Reginam et principem omnium*

(1) Tertull. adv. Psych. C: 73. (2) in Jej. mens. sep. &c. (3) Ath. apol. de fug. sua. (4) Ign. ep. ad Philip.

dierum : the queen and chief of all days : (1) and is called sometimes **DIES PANIS** the day of bread, and at other times **DIES LUCIS** the day of light. St. Augustine, after proving that the observance of Sunday, had been instituted by the apostles, says, that on that day, *masses* should be heard : (2) that this was the persuasion not only of Augustine, but of all the world, is proved from the most ancient councils. (3)

Besides the Sunday, many others were appointed to be kept holy : such as the nativity of our Lord ; the epiphany, and ascension. Of these festivals, the ancient fathers speak, as being of long standing. (4) With respect to the feasts of the saints called **NATALITIA**, we trace them up to the remotest antiquity : a short time after the apostles, the church of Smyrna instituted the feast of S. Polycarp, and other martyrs. (5) Orogen, who flourished under the emperor Severus, says, in his third homily on St. Matthew, "that the fathers had ordained, according to the will of God, that the memory of the holy innocents should be celebrated for ever."

(1) Ep. ad Mag. (5) Ser. 25. (3) Syn. Agch. C. 47. (4) Paulin. Natal. 9 S. Felix. (5) Ap. Eus. lib. 4 hist.

Of the alacrity and devotion with which our Christian forefathers celebrated all festivals, Dionysius of Alexandria, and S. Cyprian bear ample testimony: The sermons of S. Gregory of Nyssa, will perpetuate to the last age, the solemnity observed on the feast of S. Theodore, and the forty martyrs. In the Western church, it was esteemed, according to Galla Placidia, (1) a sacrilege, not to assist at the NATALITIUM of the apostles; a custom prevailed, of writing congratulatory letters on the great festivals: saluting one another, and communicating with fervour and holy joy. (2)

VIII. The reader was before informed, that on the chalices and sacred vases, it was usual to imprint the effigy of the *good shepherd*: it was also customary, in the primitive ages, not only to have crosses of wood or metal, but also to make upon themselves, their food, and other objects, the *sign of the cross*. By this practice, it was their intention to arm themselves against the evil spirit; and to invoke upon the object over which they made the sign of the cross, the

(1) Gal. imp. ad Imper. (2) Theodoret.

blessing of heaven. Of this custom, we have the most irrefragable proof: from Tertullian, (1) S. Cyril, (2) S. Basil, (3) S. Jerome, (4) Theodoret, (5) &c. &c.

IX. I remarked above, that at the entrance of the churches, there was a fountain of water: besides this, the faithful made use of *holy water*: From the book *De Romanis Pontificibus*, we learn that the water was blessed with salt: "*aqua aspersionis cum sale benediceretur in habitaculis hominum*. This appears to have been also an apostolical institution: it is mentioned by S. Clement. (6) That this water was used against the effects of magic, and other diabolical arts, we are informed by many illustrious authorities. (7) (8) It was besides, used for many other purposes: by it diseases were sometimes cured; and virtue strengthened in temptation; as appears from S. Basil. (9) Of this water, S. Cyprian, (10) S. Cyril, (11) of Jerusalem (12)

(1) de. cor. mil. 3. (2) Cyr. Hier. Catech. 13. (3) de Sp. Sa. C. 1. (4) ep. 22 ad Eust. (5) 3 hist. 10, &c. &c. (6) Clem. 8. Const. 35. (7) Hier. in vit. Hil. (8) Theodoret. 5 hist. &c. &c. (9) de spirit Sanct. cap. 27. (10) ep. 79. (11) Catechis 3. (12) de sacram.

S. Ambrose, (1) and S. Augustine, (2) make mention.

X. Another point of ceremony, among the first Christians, was the use of lamps and other lights: the lighting of lamps was among the Jews a sign of joy: as Persius remarks in his fifth satire: and that they were used also as a mark of religion, is manifest from Josephus. (3)

This practice was admitted into the earliest church: I before shewed the institution of acolytes: whose office it was, to carry lighted torches, to add to the pomp of the ceremonies. S. Jérôme testifies, that in the East it was customary, even in the broad day, to make use of lights, at the singing of the gospel: (4) and that there were lights burning before the relics of the martyrs, we may gather from S. Epiphanius in his letter to John, bishop of Jerusalem.

Though the same custom was found among the gentiles, it must not be thought, as Vigilantius affirmed, that it was from them that the church derived it: she derived it from the Jews: but granting that it was taken from the

(1) 6 Cont. Julian. (2) 8 Antiquit. 6. (3) Cont Vig. (4) Catech. 5.

pagans, why could not those things made use of for idolatrous purposes be converted to a holy use? If on certain days, lights were burning in the fanes and temples; “not, says Seneca, that the gods stand in need of light, but for the sake of religion,” why, could lights not be placed in honor of the virgin Mary? This is the reasoning of St. Jerome. Besides the oil used in the lamps, there were other kinds, of which one is mentioned by S. Mark; which, blessed by any of the faithful, was applied to the sick: and another is mentioned by S. James, and constituted the sacrament, called **EXTREME UNCTION**: of the latter and its efficacy as a sacrament, S. Cyril of Jerusalem, (1) S. Augustine, (2) S. Innocent Pope, (3) have treated.

XI. When peace was restored to the church, the faithful were convened by the sound of a bell: By a similar sound, the gentiles were accustomed to be called together to the baths, theatres, &c. (4) (5) That a trumpet from a high tower, was sounded every Sabbath among

(1) Catech. 5. (2) in ps. 33. (3) ep. 1. c. 8. (4) Mart. epig. 4. (5) Juven. Sat. 6.

the Jews, we have the testimony of Josephus. (1)

During the persecutions, the Christians were not allowed to have any signal by which to designate the hours for meeting; but notice was given by an officer, of whom I before spoke, called *cursor*. This is the opinion of Baronius, which he founds upon the highest authority. (2)

XII. When convened, the Christians invariably prayed with their faces towards the East; hence the pagans accused them of adoring the sun. (3) That this mode was delivered down from the apostles themselves, is proved by the testimony of many fathers. (4) (5) (6)

There were different rites of prayer: sometimes they knelt, at other times prostrated themselves on the ground: on Easter Sunday it appears from Tertullian, they prayed standing: (7) (8) This mode they observed from Easter to Pentecost: they never sat at prayer. The women had their heads covered: the men bare: that the practice of *striking the breast* was a

(1) de bell. 9. (2) Vid. Bar. ad. ann. 58. (3) Tertull. ap. C. 16. (4) Orig. hom. 3 in num. (5) Athan. lib. 9. (6) Basil de Sp. S. 5. (7) de cor. mil. C. 3. (8) Tertull. de orat.

laudable one, appears from the example of the publican : (1) that it obtained among the Christians, appears from the instructions of pope Nicholas to the Bulgarians.

That the faithful were accustomed at certain times, to visit in a body the tombs of the martyrs, praying as they moved along, is clear from Tertullian (2) and St. Jerome, (3) of PROCESSIONS, the council of Laodicea, makes mention. (4) That they were called by the fathers LITANIE or litanies, because they were enjoined as an expiation, at certain penitential times, is shewn from many authorities. (5) These processions were common alike in the Eastern and Western churches. That they were held at Neocæsarea, in the time of Gregory Thaumaturgus, we are assured by S. Basil. (6) But the most celebrated were those which were established at first in Gaul, by S. Mamertus, bishop of Vienna, and afterwards admitted by the whole church : and were called ROGATIONES, or ROGATIONS.

(1) Luc. 18. (2) Tertull. ad ux. lib. 2. C. 4. (3) Hier. ep. 22 ad Euseb. (4) C. 17. (5) Greg. PP. lib. 2. Regist. in pr. lib. 11. C. 2. ep. 45 ind. 4. (6) ep. 63 ad Neocæa.

. XIII. Of all the ceremonies and rites of the early Christians, that of the sacrifice of the MASS, was justly regarded as the most essential and august ; It derives its name from the Hebrew word *MISSAH*, which signifies *oblatio spontanea*; or voluntary offering. (1) That the sacrifice assumed the name of *MISSA* or *MASS* in the very beginning of the church, is certain. Pope Pius, uses the term ; (2) as also Cornelius and other Roman pontiffs of the earliest times. (3) We find it besides, in the Roman council, held under Sylvester (4) in the second council of Carthage ; (5) in St. Augustine, (6) S. Ambrose, (7) &c. &c. There can be no doubt, but that *unleaven bread* was made use of, in the mass : and that this custom was always observed in the church we have the authority of S. Epiphanius. In some churches, it was customary to celebrate mass in the evening, the priest however was fasting ; that this custom obtained in the African church, St. Augustine testifies. (8)

(1) Duter. 16. (2) ep. ad Just. vien. (3) Corn. ep. ad Sulpic. (4) in fin. (5) 2. C. 3. (6) Serm. de temp. 251. (7) ep. 33 ad Marcel. (8) ep. 18. ad Jan.

XIV. Among the most consoling usages of the primitive church, that of praying for the dead, must claim our special notice: it was soothing to the heart of a parent, a relation, or a friend, when they visited the graves of the deceased, to reflect, that though separated, they might nevertheless kneel and pray for the repose of the departed souls. Hence, they believed, on the surest grounds, that there was a middle state: a place of purgation, to which those souls which should depart in the state of venial or lesser sins, were condemned for a time. That the faithful sung canticles at funerals, and *offered the sacrifice for the dead*, is manifest from S. Jerome, (1) S. Augustine. (2) And that on the eighth, twentieth, thirtieth, fortieth, and sixtieth day, the same sacrifice was repeated for the dead, the ancient rituals testify: that it was offered especially on the anniversary day, we have the most indubitable testimonies of the ancient fathers: (3) (4) the custom of offering suffrages for the dead, was derived from the apostles themselves,

(1) ep. 27. (2) 9 Conf. 13. (3) Tertull. de. cor. mil. et lib. de monog. (4) Orat. funeb. Cæs. and many others.

as S. Augustine proves : (1) and still more ancient monuments of this apostolical tradition are found in Tertullian, Origen, S. Cyprian, S. Cyril of Jerusalem, S. Epiphanius S. Chrysostom, and many others, as well Greek as Latin.

(2)

XV. That the primitive Christians believed that guardian angels have charge over each individual, and deserve his veneration : that the saints may be invoked : that in God there are

(1) Serm. 32 de verb. apos.

(2) The reader might perhaps be pleased to see one or two samples of the inscriptions on the tombs of the primitive Christians:

OC. TAVIÆ MA. TRONÆ
V-I-DUÆ DEI.

PAX. CHRISTI.

ALEXANDER MORTUUS NON EST SED VIVIT SUPER ASTRA,
ET CORPUS IN HOC TUMULO QUIESCIT; VITAM EXPLEVIT CUM
ANTON. IMP. QUI UBI MULTUM BENEFICIA ANTEVENIRE PRÆ-
VIDERET PRO GRATIA ODIUM REDDIT. GENUA CUM FLECTENS
VERO DEO SACRIFICATURUS AD SUPPLICIA DUCITUR. O TEM-
PORA INFAUSTA QUIBUS INTER SACRA ET FESTA IN CAVERNIS
QUIDEM SALVARI POSSIMUS! QUID MISERIUS VITA! SED QUID
MISERIUS IN MORTE CUM AB AMICIS ET PARENTIBUS SEPELIRI
NEQUEAMUS. TANDEM IN CÆLO CORUSCAT, PARUM VIXIT
QUI VIXIT IV. X. TEMP.

three persons : that the pope is the chief bishop of the church : that images and relics may be venerated : and that the councils of the church are infallible, we learn I. from Sozomen 2 hist. 2. II. Theod. ver. evang. lib. 8. in fin. III. Aug. Cont. ep. Parm. lib. 1. C. 69. IV. Cypr. de unit. eccl. Optat. lib. 1 et 2. Aug. in Joan. tract 50 et 124. V. Tert. de pudic. cap. 6. et 10. S. Paulin. ep. 12 ad Sev. S. Basil. or. in S. Barlah. Greg. Nyss. or. in Theo. VI. Greg. pap. 1 ep. 4. et 24.

XVI. I shall conclude these remarks, with adducing authorities shewing the celibacy of the clergy, and the high repute in which virginity was held, among our Christian forefathers.

That the apostles, after their vocation to the apostleship, lived in celibacy, S. Jerome infers from the words of the Redeemer : “ all who leave house, father, mother or wife, for my sake shall receive a hundred fold and possess life everlasting.” The example of the apostles was followed by their successors : and though it sometimes happened, that married men were raised to the dignity of priests ; still, it first became necessary to have the consent of both parties ; and after ordination, the man could have no conjugal

communication with his former wife. This is plainly shown from S. Jerome. (1) That this was the invariable custom of the primitive ages, we learn from the second council of Carthage. (2) And this ancient observance, was confirmed by Siricius (3) and Innocent, (4) Popes, and by the council of Arles, (5) Tours, &c. (6)

That the same custom prevailed in the East, Epiphanius, (7) (8) and St. Jerome (9) abundantly testify. The first œcumenical council of Nice, clearly prohibits the use of marriage to the clergy ; even though they should have been married before their ordination. That this prohibition extended even to the Lacedemonians, is evident from the epistle of S. Leo to Anastasius.

To this it has been objected, that S. Paul did not live in celibacy : for in his epistle to the Corinthians, he asserts that he had a right to carry about with him a woman : but that he meant merely a *sister*, and not a wife, is proved from the earliest fathers. (10) (11) (12) (13)

(1) advers. Jov. l. 1. (2) 2. C. 2. (3) ep. ad Himen. C. 7. (4) Inn. ep. 3 ad Exup. (5) Con. arl. C. 2. (6) Tur. 2. C. 20. (7) in comp. (8) ep. 17 ad Perag. (9) in Vigil. et. Jovin. et ep. 50. (10) Ter. de Monog. C. 8. (11) S. Jer. ad Jov. (12) S. Aug. de oper Monach. C. 4. (13) S. Chrysos. in 1 Cor.

2. That there were, in the very times of the apostles, communities of *virgins*, similar to those which are now called *monasteries*, S. Ignatius of Antioch, (1) and Clement Romanus (2) bear ample witness. The primitive fathers extol in the highest terms, this sublime state : even amongst pagan nations, the virgin was held sacred : though the flower of virginity but rarely appeared, before the establishment of the pure and holy religion of Christ.

This sketch of the customs of the primitive Christians, short as it is, will not, I trust, be deemed out of place, or unsatisfactory, by the reader. To enter into all the details, and expatiate upon all the authorities from which we derive the proofs, of these customs, would be a voluminous task ; greatly exceeding the limits, which I have marked out for this work. Should the reader desire to make a more serious study of the primitive manners, ceremonies, and doctrines, let him consult the venerable chronicler Baronius.

(1) ep. 10. 12. 13. (2) ap. Epiph. hæ. 30.

CHAPTER II.

EMPERORS.

NERO, CONTINUED.

GALBA.

OTHO.

VITELLIUS.

VESPASIAN.

TITUS.

DOMITIAN.

NERVA.

TRAJAN.

HADRIAN.

POPES.

ST. LINUS.

ST. CLETUS.

ST. CLEMENT.

ST. ANACLETUS.

ST. EVARISTUS.

ST. ALEXANDER.

ST. SIXTUS.

ST. TELESOPHORUS.

From the death of S. S. Peter and Paul, anno 69, to the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews. Anno 137.

MORE than thirty years had now elapsed, since Jesus Christ had pronounced the faith, and foretold the destruction, of Jerusalem: and the obdurate inhabitants of that devoted city took no means to avert the calamities which were soon to befall them. Impiety, in its darkest

tire, succeeded to a long series of crimes : and all restraint, both human and divine, being shaken off, the whole state was tottering to its centre, and ready to be buried by the first revolution, in utter ruin. The governors, at once avaricious and inexorable, made them feel the first effects of the divine anger : and the emperor Caligula drove them almost to despair, by setting up his own statue, and claiming public adoration, in the sanctuary of the temple. The people of Alexandria, profiting by the sanguinary dispositions of the tyrant, treated with the most barbarous cruelty the Jews, residing in that populous city : and through all Egypt. Their synagogues were destroyed ; or if any were suffered to stand, it was only that they might be profaned by the sacrilegious honors offered in the holy place, to the statues of the emperors. Their houses were forcibly broken open : their goods pillaged : the chastity of the women violated : or their resistance punished with death. The streets of Alexandria presented a funeral scene of dead bodies, dragged about and insulted by the brutal violence of the soldiery. In the circumjacent countries near Babylon, the chil-

dren of Jacob were treated with still greater barbarity: the blood of thousands was spilt: others were compelled to abandon their possessions, fly from their homes, and look for a refuge in Saleucia: but there the Greek and Syrian inhabitants, though inveterate enemies one to the other, fell upon their common victims, and massacred, it is said, to the number of fifty thousand. In Jerusalem where the paschal solemnity had assembled a numerous concourse of people, in consequence of the irreverential behaviour of one of the soldiers in the temple, the infatuated multitude vociferating, "that the insult was offered not to them, but to God," discharged a shower of stones upon the cohorts. The governor attempted to quell the tumult: but being himself insulted, he commanded his troops to take up their arms, and assemble in the fort Antonia, which overlooked the temple. The affrighted populace fled with precipitation: it is said, that in the attempt to press through the streets, which were exceedingly narrow, twenty thousand were crushed to death.

After this dreadful humiliation, various sedu-

cers, pretending to be inspired, and promising to avenge their cause, put themselves at their head: all of them perished miserably; and with them, an innumerable multitude of the deluded people.

Under the administration of Felix, the governor, a banditti of robbers, called Sicarii, from the circumstance of their always carrying about them daggers, established themselves in Judea. The high priest Jonathas, having incurred the displeasure of Felix, the governor bribed one of the Sicarii to murder him. Having effected that crime with impunity, these wretches, already very numerous, spread, like a resistless torrent, through the whole of Palestine. Every festival was saddened by the assassination of countless victims, that perished by their murderous weapons: armed with daggers, they every where commingled with the crowd, and gratified, at an unexpected moment, the dark revenge of those, by whom they were kept in pay. In a short time, their numbers so rapidly increased, that they believed themselves able to take the field even against the Romans: and accordingly, excited an insurrection among their

countrymen : chastising and plundering such as continued faithful to the common enemy.

Accident, too, contributed to render this commotion more terrible : Albinus, the successor of Felix, wishing to conciliate the favour of the Jews, took a census of all the prisoners at Jerusalem, and set at liberty those, whose crimes were not too enormous to be forgiven. The number of these culprits, in consequence of the almost entire suspension of legitimate authority, was greater than can easily be imagined : and uniting with the Sicarii, it seemed as if no human power could break the violence of their depredations.

The next governor, Cestius Florus, passed to the opposite extreme. He treated the province with all the cruelty, that a wicked heart, could devise, or unlimited power inflict. He agreed to connive at the robberies of the Sicarii, on condition that they should divide with him, their plunder : he took no pains to conceal his guilt. Cestius Gallus governor of Syria, on which the province of Judea depended, having tarried, for a few days, at Rome, three millions of the Jews, it is said, drew up a memorial, implorin-

him to free them from the tyrannic yoke laid on their nation, by the relentless Florus. Their request was treated with contempt : and, avarice and policy combining, the evil was increased ; the yoke made more galling, and their calamities augmented. Such a complication of miseries, was, however, no more than a faint prelude to the terrible disasters that were soon to follow. The malediction had been pronounced by the Jews themselves, when insisting on the death of the Son of God, they exclaimed : “ his blood be upon us and upon our children : ” this imprecation was soon to have its effect : and terrible signs announced that the woes of Judea were approaching to their consummation.

On the eighth of April, in the year of Jesus Christ 69, the anniversary of the passover, a resplendent light surrounded the temple at midnight, and shone afar through the surrounding darkness. The Eastern gate, which was of massive brass, and so ponderous that it required several men to move it on its hinges, opened of itself ; though fastened with enormous bolts, and iron bars which entered far into the walls. Shortly after the feast, on the twenty-first of

May, towards evening, just as the last rays of the sun were fading on the horizon, there appeared in the heavens, inauspicious fires, and other alarming phenomena, for which no natural cause could be assigned. (1)

But a circumstance still more astonishing (2) was the prophetic and warning cry of a Jew, whose name was Jesus, son of Ananus, which he repeated during the four years that immediately preceded the ruin of Jerusalem. This man had come to the feast of the tabernacles : and suddenly breaking the silence of the ceremonies, he exclaimed, “ Woe to the temple ! Woe to the temple ! A voice from the East, and from the West, and from the four winds of heaven, pronounces woe against the temple, and Jerusalem.” Running from street to street, he repeated these denunciations incessantly, both night and day ; the magistrates inflicted on him rigorous punishments, but instead of offering any excuse, or uttering the least complaint, he cried out the louder : “ Woe to the temple ! Woe to Jerusalem !” At length, the Roman governor

(1) Jos. bell. 7. 12. (2) Idem. *ibid.*

ordered him to be scourged, till all his ribs were bared : under this barbarous torture, he shed not a tear ; but repeated at every stroke, in a tone, still more lamentable and denunciatory : “ Woe, woe to Jerusalem ! ” They urged him to inform them whence he had come, and to explain the meaning of his cries : but they could elicit no other answer, than the repeated woes which he pronounced with redoubled vehemence. It was observed that his violent and continual exertions weakened not his voice : on the contrary, the more he exclaimed, the louder and stronger it became : and three years after, when he saw Jerusalem invested by the Romans, going round the walls and ramparts of the city, he cried out, without ceasing, in the same manner ; till the moment of his own death having arrived, he exclaimed, ‘ Woe to myself ! ’ And was that instant, pierced by an arrow shot from the enemy.

The Jews, becoming every day more blind, rushed with a fury bordering on insanity, to their own destruction.. They massacred the Roman garrison at Massada ; and forbade the usual sacrifices to be offered for the emperor.

This was the signal of an open and avowed rebellion. Some robbers from the surrounding country, uniting with the Sicarii, attacked, and made themselves masters of, the fort Antonia. The Romans, every where surprised, were driven to their last hold: and their provisions being soon exhausted, were compelled to surrender to the Jews: who, in violation of their promise, put all, without distinction, to the sword.

On the same day, twenty thousand Jews were put to death by the Romans at Cæsarea, the rendezvous of the imperial armies. On receiving this intelligence, the whole Jewish nation were seized with a kind of phrenzy. They took possession of every town and city which they could enter: demolished, or set fire to, the houses; and murdered the inhabitants.

The Syrians, on the other hand, were no less cruel, in the retaliation which they inflicted on the Jews. They fell on them wherever they discovered that they were too feeble to resist, and massacred all without mercy or distinction.

Even the Jews residing at Seythopolis, in order to purchase the favour of the Syrians, who

were more numerous than themselves, treacherously engaged to fight against their brethren, who were laying waste the country. The Syrians, pretending to distrust the sincerity of this promise, required that all the Jews, with their families, should repair to a neighbouring wood. They did so : and more than thirteen thousand were indiscriminately butchered. Simon who had been the principal instigator of the base conduct of the Scythopolitan Jews, on witnessing the tragical effects of his perfidy and ingratitude, abandoned himself to despair. "I have deserved this punishment," he exclaimed, "by my treacherous advice ; and I alone shall inflict upon myself the chastisement I deserve."— Uttering these words, he seized hold of the grey hairs of his father, and pierced him with his sword ; his mother, wife and children shared the same fate : and then with a hideous and haggard look, raising on high his dagger, still reeking with the blood of his parents and children, he plunged it into his own breast, and expired.

All the cities of Syria, except those of Antioch, and Sidon, treated the unfortunate Jews

with similar inhumanity. The streets were choked up with their carcasses : the old and the young ; the armed and the defenceless, were confounded in the general carnage : and the bodies deprived of their clothes, were, publicly exposed, to the mockery of the people.

In Egypt they experienced a still greater cruelty. The citizens of Alexandria were, on a certain occasion, assembled in the amphitheatre : it chanced that some Jews made their appearance ; the enemies of their nation vociferated that they were spies, and traitors. The Jews began, immediately, to fly : three were made prisoners : and the Alexandrians were preparing to satisfy their animosity and savage revenge, by burning them alive, when the other Jews ran from every quarter of the city, to the succour of their brethren : each came armed with a burning torch, with which it was their intention to set fire to the amphitheatre in which the multitude was assembled. Two Roman legions, and an army of five hundred African veterans, were instantly ordered under arms, with a command, not to shew any quarters to the Hebrews : to pillage their houses ; and consign to

the flames the section of the city, which they inhabited. The Roman troops attacked them in an isolated place. They met with desperate resistance; but at last sinking under the fierce and resistless shock of the enemy, the Jews gave way: and their quarter of the city was literally deluged in blood. The reader will deem this no exaggeration, when he learns, that the dead bodies being afterwards numbered, amounted to fifty thousand. The governor appalled by the horrid spectacle, commanded the legions to retire: but it was impossible to check the fury of the undisciplined barbarians; much less of the populace, who after putting to the sword all whom they could reach, gratified their dark revenge, by insulting and lacerating the bodies of the dead.

In the mean time, Cestius Gallus, governor of Syria, with an army of legionary and auxiliary troops, invested the capital and the temple, of which the rebels had at first taken possession. He vigorously assaulted them: and then feigned a precipitate flight: this stratagem had its effect; the Jews emboldened by their apparent success, made a furious sally on the troops of

Gallus, and pursued the fugitive enemy to the distance of several leagues.

After this specious advantage, it was in vain to think of inducing them to submit to the Romans : on the contrary, they assumed a bold stand : and determined to make preparations for a long and serious war.

The Israelites, who had been converted to Christianity, took no part, it must be observed, in this insurrection : mindful of the terrible predictions of the Son of God, and in pursuance of his admonition, they fled towards the mountains, and took refuge in the little town of Pella, on the frontiers of Syria.

In this conjuncture, when the fate of Jerusalem was to be determined, the conduct of the war was transferred from Cestius Gallus to Vespasian. Every thing now began to assume a different aspect. That celebrated general, having collected an army of more than sixty thousand men, marched through Galilee ; reducing to his obedience, without any resistance, every place, except the city of Jotapat ; of which, the historian Josephus, a brave and experienced officer, commanded the garrison. This place held

out a siege of forty days ; at the expiration of which, it was taken and destroyed. Of the besieged army nearly half perished : the remnant was compelled to fly for refuge into caverns, where they fell by each other's hands. Josephus chose rather to throw himself on the mercy of the conqueror : and calculating as well on the military talents and superior valor of Vespasian, as on the peculiar condition in which the empire then was, he is said to have observed : that the general, " would restore him to liberty, after being made emperor of Rome : and that event, he added, is not far distant."

Affairs were in this posture, when the Romans, disgusted and wearied with the tyranny and brutish excesses of Nero, dispatched, that bane of the empire and of mankind : that imperial monster, the enemy alike of heaven and earth, was the first to unsheath the sword of persecution against the peaceable and inoffensive Christians : not satisfied with imbruing his hands in their guiltless blood, he even published against them a formal edict.

" Surely, says Tertullian, (1) speaking on

(1) Tert. Apol.

this subject, that religion must have had something in it more than human, against which, a *Nero* raised the first signal of persecution." Even pagan historians speak with execration, of the cruelties, which this tyrant inflicted on the followers of Christ; especially on the occasion of the conflagration of Rome; of which he was the sole author. This awful spectacle was to him, at first, a subject of savage exultation; but dreading the resentment of the people driven to desperation by such an act of wanton wickedness, he accused the Christians of that crime, says Suetonius, (1) and condemned them to suffer unheard of torments. They were, continues that historian, not only fastened to crosses, but some were covered with the skins of beasts, and mangled by dogs; (2) some were steeped in large caldrons of melted pitch, and afterwards set on fire like torches, to disperse the darkness of the night. This was the kind of tyranny in which Nero took most delight. Dressed in the habit of a charioteer, he regaled himself, from his gardens, with the sight of their torments, .

(1) Suet. Ner. c. 16. (2) Juv. Sat. 1 and 8. Sen. ep. 14.

and gratified the vengeance of the people, with the horrid spectacle. The persecution was not confined to Rome : at Milan, Saints Gervasius and Protasius, Celsus and Nazarius, suffered martyrdom. Nero was the more prodigal of the blood of the Christians, as he had nothing to fear from men, whose only study it was to suffer with patience, and obey with resignation.

But his idolatrous subjects were not so insensible to the sufferings of this life : a general discontent soon appeared among them : they openly rebelled, and proclaimed Galba emperor. Nero, whose mind was as weak as his heart was cruel, was paralysed, and driven almost to insanity by excessive fear ; he bewailed, but took no measures to avert, his fate ; at length, awakened from his lethargy by the approach of death, he fled, under the disguise of a tattered cloak, to the country seat of his freedman Phaon : parched with thirst, he was reduced to the necessity of drinking ditch water, from the hollow of his hands. In the mean time, the senate had condemned him to be scourged to death : and soon after his arrival at the country seat hearing the sound of the horses' hoofs, as the executioners

of the sentence were approaching, he pierced his own throat, with a poignard which he had provided, in case of necessity, for that purpose. He died in the year of Christ seventy ; on the ninth of June, the anniversary of the day on which he imbrued his hands in the blood of his own mother.

Galba, was acknowledged, emperor by all orders of the people. On his accession, he was seventy years of age : he wielded the imperial sceptre only nine months, and was assassinated by his soldiers, at the instigation of Otho, who was immediately raised to the throne. Otho, however, found a competitor in Vitellius : the army of the Lower Rhine, declared at the same time, in favor of his rival ; a battle was fought in Italy ; Otho was defeated : and put an end to his life, after a reign of three months. On the other hand, the legions of Syria hearing of the death of the last emperor of the blood of the Cæsars, and of the attempt and success of the German armies, forced their general Vespasian to accept the sovereign power. He accordingly set out from Palestine, leaving his son Titus to prosecute the siege of Jerusalem. As soon

as the news of this event was heard at Rome, Vitellius was murdered by the people ; and his body flung into the Tiber. His victorious rival, assured of the esteem and affection of the whole empire, only waited a favorable opportunity to embark for Rome. He was then at Alexandria.

The superstitious citizens believed that Vespasian possessed the power of working miracles ; so that, by some, he was mistaken for the Messiah : his power daily increased : not only the Jews, but all the Eastern nations, according to Suetonius (1) and Tacitus, (2) were impressed with a conviction, originating in the holy scriptures, that, at this epoch, was to rise out of Palestine a conqueror, who should rule the universe. Thus did they confound the temporal, with the spiritual, reign of the Messiah.

The Israelites understood these prophecies, as applicable, in a carnal sense, to the Redeemer : and the courtiers of Vespasian complimented him with the title of the " Great Conqueror of Nations," foretold by the prophets and oracles ; even Josephus (3) was not ashamed,

(1) Suet. Vesp. c. 4. (2) Tac. Hist. 5. (3) Jos. bell. iii. 27.

though a Jew, to stoop to this sacrilegious and unmeaning flattery.

Meantime the conduct of Titus, who remained in Palestine, was characterised by that clemency, and wisdom, which afterwards made him the delight of Rome. He was seconded, in his love for peace, by all the virtuous and judicious personages, who were still to be found among the Jews: but the infatuated *multitude* were determined to resist, and if possible, to annihilate the power of Rome; impiously grounding their hopes of success in Him, whom their impieties had outrageously offended.

A set of impostors called Zelotæ, from the zeal which they affected for religion, flocked to Jerusalem, from the neighbouring villages, and made every quarter of the city a scene of tumult and of plunder. The pontiff Ananias, who was still revered by the people, for his age and experience, excited the great body of the citizens to oppose them; but all his efforts were unable to dislodge them from the temple, of which they had taken possession. They confederated with the Idumeans: and these barbarians, to the number of twenty thousand, soon appeared before the gates

of the city. They united together under the covert of a dark and tempestuous night, and rushed upon their unsuspecting enemies. Five hundred perished amidst the horrors of that fatal night.

The Idumeans, after this, spread themselves through the city: and their steps were every where marked with human blood.

After this success, the tyranny of the faction was excessive. They accused all who were obnoxious to their party, of being favorable to the Romans: and this accusation was invariably followed by death. Death itself did not screen the victims of their fury: they forbade them the rights of sepulture: and rather than mitigate the rigor of that inhuman measure, suffered their bodies to rot in the public streets, and spread infection through the city.

At last these wretches split into two factions: at the head of one stood a fanatic, whose name was John. The other was headed by one Simon; who gathering together a multitude of robbers and murderers, plundered the adjoining towns, and reduced all Idumea under his subjection. The Sicarii, at first, endeavoured to oppose his progress: but having defeated them, in

several battles, he encamped before the gates of the capital with thirty thousand men.

There could not have occurred a conjuncture more agreeable to his wishes. The public hatred for John had reached its summit. Besides his own personal ferocity, he was unable to restrain that of the banditti, which had placed him at their head: cruel to excess, and not less voluptuous than cruel, they abandoned themselves to acts of shameless impurities. After violating the chastity of the most respectable ladies of Jerusalem, they assumed their dress and imitated their deportment, and abandoned themselves to crimes which history would blush to mention. The people deemed any resource expedient in these calamitous circumstances; opened their gates to Simon, and delivered themselves up to the mercy of his ruthless followers.

The city then saw itself harassed, at once, by three factions: two of the Zelotæ, led on by John and Eleazar; and that of Simon to whose standard the Sicarii had again resorted. These factions waged against one another an exterminating warfare: burned the greater part of the outer buildings of the temple; and consumed

together with them, the corn which was there laid up in abundance : and thus cut off the only means which remained of holding out an obstinate siege. But when there was question of opposing the Romans, all parties became united : and the Zelotæ, Sicarii, and Idumeans, with a devotion, which fanaticism alone could inspire, offered sacrifice together at the same altar. But this union was soon to be dissolved : and this devotion only served to profane a sacrifice, on which the Almighty no longer looked with complacency. During the ceremony a misunderstanding occurred : and jealousy kindling into rage, they fell upon one another ; and the blood of men, priests and victims, flowed in one copious stream.

The Romans, apprised of these disorders, did not immediately direct their attack against the capital : but contented themselves with ravaging the country and cutting off from the city, all means of subsistence. After spreading devastation in every direction, Titus, at length, commenced his operations, at the distance of about six furlongs from the city : he was at the head of four Roman legions, and the auxiliary troops

of Agrippa ; together with those of the kings of Emesa and Arabia. He pitched his camp on mount Olivet : it was from this very mountain that Christ surveyed Jerusalem, and wept over it.

In consequence of the solemnity of the pass-over, the city was thronged with a vast multitude of people, who had assembled to celebrate that great festival. The Romans ascertained that the number of lambs consumed at the last celebration of that festival, exceeded two hundred and fifty thousand. The multitude that attended it must consequently have been immense : (1) famine soon began to make its ravages : and the infection, caused by the dead bodies which were left unburied in the streets, rendered the horror of the scene indescribable.

In the year 72, on the feast of Azymes, which fell, that year, on the fourteenth of April, the Zelotæ having possession of the interior of the

(1) It is not difficult to imagine the number of persons at this period, within the walls of Jerusalem. There were, as the reader saw in the text, more than two hundred and fifty thousand lambs : allowing then ten persons to each lamb, there will be two millions five hundred thousand souls.

temple, opened its gates to the people, who had come to offer their adorations. John, stationed in the first enclosure, despatched, through the city, a body of his followers, with daggers concealed beneath their garments : in an unexpected hour, they fell upon the partizans of Eleazar : slew many and made themselves masters of the interior, as well as the exterior of that vast edifice. After this, the faction of Eleazar became extinct : and there remained but one portion of the Zelotæ, headed by the implicable John : but the Sicarii, stimulated by the ambitious Simon, continued the work of discord and desolation.

Titus, at the head of six hundred horse, approached the city to reconnoitre. He imagined, and hoped, that the Jews, agitated by intestine commotions, and harassed by domestic quarrels, would gladly open their gates, and hail him as their deliverer ; but instead of this, the besieged made a sudden and desperate sally on the Roman troops : and Titus narrowly escaped with his life. The following day, he approached with greater circumspection, and drew up his army almost under the very walls of the city.

The local situation of Jerusalem was peculiar-

ly adapted to hold out a siege : it was fortified both by art and nature : the city was built on two hills, and defended by a triple wall, wherever an assault was practicable. On the third of May the siege commenced : fifteen days after, the Roman army forced their way through the first enclosure and took possession of the Northern part of the city, as far as the valley of Cedron : beyond which there were two other walls to be broken down, before they could enter the heart of the city. Hoping and believing that the Jews would capitulate, Titus remained, for some time, inactive : but after an interval of five days, he forced the second wall, not without several desperate conflicts : he there allowed his army a short time to breathe : and during this period of repose, he earnestly exhorted the Jews to submit ; for his humane and benevolent heart shuddered at the idea of their total destruction.

The better to accomplish this end, he despatched Josephus into the city, to expostulate with his obdurate countrymen : but notwithstanding his pathetic and cogent persuasions, he was loaded with reproaches, and sent back with scorn. The two tyrants, John and Simon, re-

doubled their vigilance : and deliberately put to death all who dared to approach the gates, without their special permission.

In the meantime the famine increased ; spread through every quarter of the city, and made a general havoc : the wretch, whose misfortune it was to be in good health, and in vigour, was instantly put to the torture, and forced to disclose where his provisions were concealed.

The horror of their situation was aggravated by the licentiousness of the factious soldiers. The house whose doors were closed, was immediately destroyed : the women were dragged from their last morsel, trampled under foot, or dashed against the pavement, by the ferocious intruders. They even tore from the unfortunate wretches, the few roots which they had collected, out of the walls of the city, at the peril of their lives : for all who were apprehended without the city, were crucified as a terror to the rebels. Sometimes more than five hundred suffered this kind of death in a single night : so that, after sometime, crosses were wanting on which to suspend the stragglers. Thus by a terrible, but just judgment, did that decidal na-

tion suffer a chastisement, analogous to the crime, to which, as to its primitive cause, all their calamities may be traced.

The Romans erected several batteries, which were, immediately, destroyed by the besieged: emboldened by this success, the Jews made a vigorous sally on the besiegers, and having destroyed a considerable number of them, retreated back to the city. Titus then resolved to surround with a trench, six miles in circumference, that part of Jerusalem which still remained in possession of the Jews; thus literally fulfilling, without knowing it, the prediction of Jesus Christ.

After this circumvallation, the ravages of famine and pestilence converted the whole city into one vast charnel house. The streets were filled up with dead bodies: through a single gate, in the space of ten weeks, sixteen thousand corpses were carried out; a regular account was kept; that the men, commissioned to bury them, might be paid. In a short time, it became impossible to remove them: the air was impregnated with pestilential vapours: the infection reached even to the camp of Titus: who

raising his eyes to heaven, with a deep sigh, solemnly called God to witness, that the calamities and woes of the Jews were not to be attributed to his army, but to their obduracy. The deep despair, the sullen repinings, the anguish, the melancholy, and confusion of the Jews, may be more easily conceived by the reader, than described by the historian.

The garrison, however, still continued to deceive themselves with the fond hope of ultimate success; and many false prophets deluded the mass of the people with a promise of the divine assistance.

As many of the more rational, as could escape, took refuge in the Roman camp: where several died by overcharging their stomachs with food. Some of these deserters had swallowed pieces of gold, as the only means of securing the remnant of their fortunes against the rapacity of the soldiers; one of these was accidentally surprised by a Syrian soldier, in the act of collecting the gold from his excrements; immediately, the report was circulated through the camp, that the Jews who fled from the city, had their entrails stored with gold: this report ex-

cited the avarice of the Roman army : they waylaid the deserters from Jerusalem ; and ripped open the bellies of two thousand Jews, in the space of one night. Titus forbade these atrocities under pain of death ; but they were still continued in defiance of his orders, though with greater secrecy.

At length, Titus, seeing that it was useless to procrastinate any longer, and fearing lest the foreign auxiliaries should desert his standard, began to make preparations to batter down the third, and last wall. This, with immense labour, and the loss of a great part of his army, he effected : entered through the breach made in the wall by the battering ram, and became master of the lower part of the city. The famine was now universal : and had spread even among the soldiers of the garrison ; perishing with hunger, they gnawed the leather of their bucklers : a few roots were now considered an extraordinary luxury. The following story of a Jewish lady will present to the reader a faint idea of the horrors of these times : this lady was named Mary ; (1) distinguished by her birth

(1) Jos. vii. 7.

and great riches; she had come from the vicinity of the Jordan, to celebrate the pasch; in a short time she saw herself stripped of every resource, and unable to support her life: growing wild with hunger, and reduced to the last extremity, fixing her haggard eyes on the infant which she suckled at her breast, she exclaimed: —“ Unfortunate child! Why should I spare thy life, whose fate it must be either to suffer a thousand miseries before thy death; or to be reduced to a shameful servitude? No! Better for thee to die, than be a pagan’s slave.” Saying this, she thrust a knife into the breast of her child: roasted and devoured one half of the flesh, and reserved the other for another meal. The odour soon reached, and attracted, the famished soldiers: with their naked swords pointed at her breast, they commanded her to deliver up all the meat which she had concealed. “ I have kept it for you, she replied, here it is, eat it:” and threw the mangled trunk at their feet. Famished and ferocious as they were, they stood paralysed and aghast. “ Behold, she resumed, the remnant of my own child, killed by my own hands: its flesh I have roasted; and have eaten

a part of it : surely you are not more delicate than a woman, and have not more sensibility than a mother." Overcome by this inhuman spectacle, their blood ran cold, and they fled with horror. The tale soon reached the Roman camp : by some it was deemed too frightful to be believed : by others it was heard with pity : by the most part with indignation. Titus again protested before God, that the Jews persisted in war : and had refused the peace and rejected the amnesty which he had offered them.

But if the clemency of Titus increased, his soldiers were resolved on exterminating the Jewish nation. The Christians who had fled to Pella, heard of these disasters with religious terror : and recognized the literal accomplishment of the words which the Redemer addressed to the daughters of Sion as he bore his cross to mount Calvary : that "a day should come, when they should pronounce the barren womb happy ; happy the breast that had never given suck."

The Jews were still in possession of the temple, and the citadel, which of itself formed, as it were, a distinct place. Every effort was made

to dislodge them from their position : a general consternation pervaded the people, in consequence of the cessation of the *perpetual* sacrifice. On the tenth day of July, they discovered that it was impossible to offer sacrifice, according to the law ; because they saw themselves deprived both of priests and victims. But verifying still more fatally what the prophet had foretold, they saw not, in the midst of their woes and abandonment, the consummation of their malediction : their hopes were now centered in the high and solid walls of the temple ; which the besiegers found impossible to scale, or make any impression upon with the battering ram. On the eighth of August, Titus found it necessary to set fire to the gates of the second enclosure of the temple. The fire reached the galleries which formed a communication between the temple, and the citadel ; and the conflagration continued during the following night. In the meanwhile the Roman forces made a bold assault : in which Titus performed prodigies of valor. The soldiers climbed up the ramparts which they thought the Jews had abandoned : but scarcely had they planted their eagles on its

summit, before they were charged upon with unexampled fury. Neither valor nor discipline could withstand the shock : the besiegers were precipitated from the battlements : and their standards were carried off in triumph by the Jewish army.

In the midst of this confusion, a Roman soldier, (1) urged on by a secret, and, according to Josephus, a supernatural impulse, snatching up a fire brand, thrust it into the houses adjoining the temple : and notwithstanding the active exertions of Titus to save the magnificent building, the wonder and even veneration of all the nations of the earth, the flame spread itself in every direction, and reduced the august edifice to ashes. The agony of the Jews at the sight of their temple in ruins, became indescribable : they were now persuaded that heaven had abandoned them : the city re-echoed with dismal shrieks and lamentations. Even some who were gasping in the agonies of death, lifted up their dying eyes, for the last time, and bitterly bewailed the destruction of the temple. This great and decisive event occurred on the same

(1) Jos. vii. 10.

day, and in the same month in which the temple, built by Solomon, was destroyed by Nabuchodonosor : that fatal day was the tenth of August, in the year of Christ seventy-two. The most desperate of the Jewish soldiers rallied under John and Simon, and fled to the higher city, which they resolved to defend at any peril. An immense crowd of fanatics perished in the temple ; and among these were six thousand men, women, and children who had put themselves under the protection of a false prophet from the lower city, deceived by the promise of a speedy deliverance.

The upper part of the city, whither the followers of John and Simon had fled, was built on mount Sion : and its situation, which they believed impregnable, inspired the surviving rebels with fresh courage. But Titus, after great labour, reduced it to ashes, on the eighth of September ; and put all the garrison to the sword. If any part had escaped the flames, he immediately demolished it : and caused the plough to be drawn over the whole : thus fulfilling the prophecy, and verifying the denunciation of the

Redeemer : that in that place of malediction, one stone should not be left upon another.

The plunder was so great that gold was reduced to half its value, in the neighbouring provinces : John and Simon were dragged from the vaults, in which they had concealed themselves : the former was imprisoned for life : the latter reserved to grace the conqueror's triumph.

It is impossible to specify, with certainty, the number of Israelites who perished in this war ; the most fatal that has ever been recorded in the history of nations. Josephus tells us (1) that eleven hundred thousand died during the siege. The captives amounted to nearly one hundred thousand. They were reduced to slavery : but scarcely would any one deign to buy them. (2) The soldiers who fought under his command and those of the neighbouring nations would have placed the crown on the head of Titus : but he refused that honor, alleging that he was a mere instrument of the vengeance of a terrible God, on that impious and obdurate nation.

(1) Jos. vii. 7. (2) Philost. vi. 14.

To secure his conquests, he left a legion at Jerusalem; marched to Cæsarea; and sailed back to Rome: he entered the city in triumph; and was hailed by all orders with enthusiasm, as the conqueror of Judea. By his side in the same car, sat Vespasian, his father: while immense quantities of gold, taken from the temple; the table of the laws; and the golden candlestick were displayed to the view of the people: and a great multitude of captives, with Simon at their head, closed the magnificent procession. (1)

(1) The triumphal arch erected to Titus, on this occasion, is still to be seen, though in a mutilated condition, at Rome: on it the candlestick and table are represented in bas-relief. There are also extant medals of Titus and Vespasian, on which is represented a matron sitting at the foot of a palm tree, covered with a long mantle, with her head reclining on her hand, with this inscription: JUDÆA CAPTIVA: Judea in captivity.

The history of the Jewish war was written in Greek by Josephus; who having been made prisoner and set at liberty, assumed the name of Flavius, which was the family name of Vespasian. He was eye witness to all that he relates: and as he continued a Jew, he cannot be suspected of wishing to shew the accomplishment of the prophecies of Jesus Christ.

The destruction of Jerusalem is mentioned also by many pagan writers: especially by Tacitus, Suetonius, Plutarch, and Dio.

After the destruction of Jerusalem, the pharisees and saducees, were no longer heard of. It would appear as though they had been buried amid the ruins of that devoted city. The Nazareans still survived : but their system was so compounded of the Jewish and Christian religions, that it was difficult to determine whether they were the followers of the one or the other.

Their errors soon dissolved into those of Ebion ; an heresiarch who began to dogmatize in the neighbourhood of Pella, whilst the Christians were shut up in that town. (1) His disciples affected an extreme poverty : and among other visionary doctrines, maintained that Jesus Christ was born of Joseph and Mary according to the flesh : that he was not the Son of God : but that Christ had descended into his body from heaven, in the form of a dove : that God then gave him dominion over the world to come ; abandoning the present to Satan. He obliged his followers to marry, and allowed a plurality of wives.

(1) That Ebion broached his doctrine immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem, Josephus testifies.

The reveries of Cerinthus differed but little from those of Ebion. He treated the humanity of Jesus Christ with the same disrespect : and specified the precise time, when Christ had descended into him : viz. at his baptism ; when the eternal Father announced him to the world, as is related in the gospel : he added, that when the time of the passion had arrived, Christ ascended into heaven, leaving Jesus behind to suffer death.

The reader may here descry the first germ of Nestorianism : according to which system, there were two distinct persons in Jesus Christ : and he may also perceive the unshaken firmness, with which the contrary belief was maintained in the infancy of the church.—These errors of Cerinthus stand in direct opposition to the doctrine of St. Paul : and the decrees of the apostolic council of Jerusalem ; in which the great teacher of the gentiles, as we saw, exerted all his zeal against the pretensions of certain Jews, who, whilst they affected an extraordinary attachment for Christianity, laboured at bottom, to annihilate all the virtue of the cross of Jesus Christ. These pretended Christians were like-

wise the first to propagate the Millenarian system in its gross and dangerous acception. They believed and taught that, after the general resurrection, Christ should commence his terrestrial reign at Jerusalem : that during the lapse of a thousand years, they should be free to indulge, without remorse, all their sensual appetites, and to riot in carnal pleasures. These reveries, as long as St. Paul lived, were confined to a few enthusiasts; but after his death they were widely diffused, and publicly defended. About this period, Menander, a native of Samaria, and a disciple of Simon Magus began to disseminate the errors of his master. The baptism of that imposter he asserted, was the true resurrection ; conferring immortality, even in this world, on all by whom it was received. At the same time, to check the progress of this heresy, some zealous doctors formed in the school of the apostles, drew up a number of constitutions, which long claimed the public veneration of the church.

The book entitled, " Of the Pastor," written by Hermas, a fervent layman, made its appearance, in all probability, about this period. The

style of this work is plain, but full of unction. It is divided into three parts ; the first and third comprize a number of revelations : the second contains an abridgment of the principal rules of Christian morality. It was the opinion of Origen, S. Jerome, and others, that S. Paul alludes to Hermas in his first epistle to the Romans, chap. 16. St. Clement, was now sitting on the pontifical chair : He had succeeded St. Cletus, (1) successor of St. Linus, about twenty-two years after the death of St. Peter : and in the year of Christ ninety-three.

Under this pontiff a dangerous cabal was formed at Corinth : some priests having been deposed by the laity, appealed to the Roman

(1) By some writers it is believed, that St. Clement succeeded not Cletus but Linus : and they maintain their opinion on the authority of S. Optatus Milevitanus, lib. 2, and of S. Augustine, ep. 162. By the ancient monuments of the Roman church, Clement is made the fourth in order. The former opinion may have originated in the similitude of names, and confounded Cletus with Anacletus. Some heretics have asserted that Cletus and Linus sat together. The assertion is false ; repugnant alike to tradition, the ancient catalogues, and the unity of the apostolic see. The following is the order of Pagi : Peter, Linus, Clement, Cletus, Anacletus, Evaristus. I have followed that of Baronius.

church, "the mother and mistress of all others." In reply to the appellants, Clément wrote an epistle directed to the Corinthians: the bearers of which were some of the distinguished members of the Roman church. This letter was of so conciliating a nature, that it not only put an end to the divisions, but was held in such high veneration, that it was publicly read in the churches of Corinth, for more than two centuries after. (1) It will pèrhaps not be useless to observe, that although we do not find in this epistle, the elevation, and divine sublimity of the inspired writings, it is nevertheless remarkable for a singular perspicuity, purity, and elegance of style: the reasoning is cogent and convincing. To inspire the faithful of Corinth, with a horror for the divisions, occasioned by a few interested individuals, "it is, he says, a shame, my dear brethren: it is unworthy the disciples of the gospel, that the scandals of your church, the ancient and respectable church of Corinth, should be heard of not only by us, but

(1) Eusebius testifies that even as late as his own times, the epistle of S. Clement was publicly read in many churches Eus. 3 hist. lib. 4. C. 22.

by those who make of them a subject of malicious triumph against the truth : by your inconsiderate respect for a few rash and seditious men, the name of the Lord is blasphemed among the gentiles.” After reminding them of their primitive virtues, and their faith which hitherto had continued unchanged, “ we should, he observes, perform with regularity, whatever the Lord has commanded us to do : he has specified the time and manner of our obligations : he has himself determined when, and by whom they should be offered. In the Mosaic law, there were functions peculiar to the sovereign pontiff : the sacrificers had a special ministry to fulfil ; the Levites too were charged with particular duties. The people were also bound to the observance of certain precepts, suitable to their condition. Each one of you, my dear brethren, should humbly keep himself in his proper place : without transgressing the limits marked out for him. The Father has sent Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ has sent the apostles, who according to his order, have announced the gospel in provinces and cities ; and have established bishops and deacons to direct and

govern such as were converted. By the light of the Holy Spirit, they foresaw that there would be contentions about the dignity of bishops, and therefore after the institution of the first pastors, they decreed, that, those pastors should be succeeded in the ministry, by men of approved virtue. Such as were thus appointed by the apostles, or by their successors with the approbation of the church, and who have governed the flock of Jesus Christ without reproach, cannot *without injustice* be deposed from the ministry." Such is the doctrine contained in the letter of St. Clement to the Corinthians : had its counsels been attended to in succeeding ages ; had bishops been suffered to govern their flocks undisturbed by the irregular interference of laymen, history would not have to lament the schisms which have divided so many of the fairest portions of the church.

By some judicious modern critics, it is believed that Clement is the author of a second epistle, of which considerable fragments are still extant : by others equally judicious it is rejected. But the *itinerary of St. Peter*, is by all admitted to be suppositious. As for the *apostolic canon*

stitutions which were made up of collections of the various regulations of church discipline, as established in several councils of the second and third centuries, they are considered apocryphal.

(1)

St. Clement in his letter to the Corinthians, bears formal testimony to the martyrdom of S. Peter and S. Paul: and informs them, that these holy apostles were put to death through the intrigue of false brethren, by whom they had often been persecuted during life.

Clement occupied the pontifical chair nine years: that is, from the year ninety-three to the end of the first century. From what source a circumstantial account of his exile and martyrdom have been derived, remains a subject of conjecture.

The emperor Vespasian died in the eighty-first year of the Christian era. He is not numbered on the catalogue of the persecutors of the

(1) This epistle is exploded, as not genuine, by Eusebius, S. hist. 32. S. Jerome. de scrip. Ecc. in Clem. and Photius in biblioth. It is remarkable that S. Jerome cites a passage from one of the epistles of S. Clement, in which he speaks *de mundis trans oceanum positis*: or worlds lying beyond the ocean. Hier. in Eph. 2. See Baron. ad ann. 95.

church : during his reign, however, a great number of christians were put to death. They were confounded with the Jews : and treated with the same contempt and cruelty, which that unfortunate people experienced. He was succeeded by his son Titus, whose humane disposition, has^d been celebrated, even by Christian writers. Reflecting one night, that he had not granted any favor, or contributed, in a direct manner, to the happiness of any subject, "my friends," he sighed, "I have lost a day." He continued but two years on the throne ; and was succeeded by his brother Domitian.

Domitian was a second Nero. He rivalled that monster in his immoralities, cruelty, and hatred for the Christians. He had not worn the crown two years, before he issued against them a sanguinary edict. Flavius Clemens, his cousin german, who had been converted to Christianity, with all his household, was put to death, by his express command. Flavia Domitilla, the consul's wife, and who was also related to the emperor, was condemned to exile. Another Flavia Domitilla, niece to Clemens,

shared the same fate, though banished to a different region. Achilles and Nereus, two of her eunuchs, accompanied her in her exile : and were both bedeaded for their attachment to the Christian faith.

St. John, the beloved disciple of Jesus Christ, and the only survivor of those who had seen, and conversed with the Redeemer, was arraigned before this tyrant. He had returned to Ephesus, almost worn out by his labours in preaching the gospel through Upper Asia. The tyrant, without any regard to his venerable age, condemned him, as Tertullian relates, to be plunged into a caldron of boiling oil, near the Latin gate ; but the apostle emerged from it without receiving any injury. (1). The relentless Do-

(1) Of this miracle, Tertullian de præscrip. C. 36 ; Eusebius 3 ; S. Jerome in Jovin lib. 1 et in Matt. 20, bear witness. The church has instituted a festival in remembrance of the fact ; that it occurred under Domitian, all writers, as well Greek as Latin, excepting only S. Epiphanius, assure us. This father I know not on what grounds, says that he was banished to Patmos, (and consequently since his banishment was posterior to his being plunged into the caldron of oil, that he was condemned to that punishment,) under Claudius. (Hier. 51.) Victorinus Pictaviensis and Primasius affirm that he was banished to Patmos to work in the mines. See Spondan. ad ann. 92 I. and II.

mitian, banished him to the Isle of Patmos, in the Archipelago. In this desolate abode, he was favoured with the mysterious revelations, contained in the apocalypse; and which he addressed to the seven churches of Asia, which had been in a special manner committed to his care, viz: the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. He addresses himself in a prophetic manner, to the angels of these several churches; that is to their bishops: but his reproaches were directed rather to the flock in general, than to the pastors themselves. Carried off by a divine enthusiasm and full of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he soars with the flight of an eagle to heaven, and is lost in mystery, and signs, and prophetic emblems, which relate to the destruction of idolatry and the world; and the glory of the saints.

It is in vain to attempt to explain the book of revelations: if we except the prophecies relating to the first persecutions, the apocalypse has been, and will continue to be, a sealed book: all that we can with certainty learn from it is, that Christ shall defeat all his adversaries: that there will be confusion and withering away in

the last days ; that the whole world shall be consumed by fire ; and that after all these calamities, the general judgment will take place : and the church, represented under the name of Jerusalem, shall triumph over her enemies, and flourish for all eternity.

Domitian died in the year ninety-eight, and was succeeded by Nerva. At his accession, a general amnesty was proclaimed, and St. John returned to Ephesus. Timothy, who had been bishop of that church, had fallen a victim to his zeal in reproving the vices of the idolaters. St. John was now ninety years old ; and regardless of his extreme age, he not only undertook the government of the church of Ephesus, but visited the neighbouring provinces ; and consecrated with his own hands, his disciple Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna.

In one of those excursions, he met with a young man whose appearance and deportment indicated that he was of no ordinary cast. Conceiving a peculiar attachment to the youth, St. John committed him to the care of the bishop of the place to be instructed and baptized. The bishop neglected his trust : the sea-

son for administering the sacrament arrived : but the young Neophyte did not appear : carried away by wicked company, he not only forgot the precepts of Christianity, but became a robber on the highways. The apostle, on returning, demanded of the bishop, the youth whom he had intrusted to his care. Alas ! replied the bishop, he is dead : dead to God and to religion : he has left me : forsaken Christianity, and joined a band of robbers on the mountains. The venerable apostle was overwhelmed with grief. Forgetting his feebleness and age, he called for a horse, and hastened away in pursuit of the unfortunate young man ; with sighs and tears he sought him amidst the mountains and woods, and, at length, discovered the lost sheep. The young robber, recognized his benefactor, and covered with confusion, began to fly ; but the apostle pursued him, exclaiming ; my son, why do you fly from me ? I am ready to sacrifice my life for yours : return to your father : or rather return to Jesus Christ. It is he who stretches out his arms to receive you ; he addresses you by my mouth. The young man melted into tears, stopped, and embraced his tender father

but his right hand, which had been the instrument of so many crimes, he concealed : S. John seized and kissed it : and having earnestly prayed for him, brought him back to the church. The young man lived and died a penitent.

After his return from exile, S. John wrote his gospel, at the solicitation of the Asiatic churches. (1) His principal object was to establish the divinity of Jesus Christ : and then to refute the errors of Ebion, and the Nicholaites. Of all the gospels, this is the most sublime : it diffuses throughout the ardours of that sacred charity, which was kindled in the heart of the evangelist, when he reposed on the bosom of his God. The same spirit pervades his epistles : in them he insists on charity, as the great law and characteristic feature of Christianity, without which, the mere profession of religion would be vain.

(1) That S. John wrote his gospel at Ephesus, after his return to Patmos, S. Athanasius assures us. Ath. in Synop. S. Epiphanius affirms the same : Hær. 51. as also S. Irenæus. lib. 3. cap. 1. et ap. Euseb. 5. hist. 8. By others it is said that he wrote it in the island of Patmos, but that it was published at Ephesus. Metaphr. ap. Lipo tom. 1. Dorothe. in Synops. That his object in writing his gospel was to refute and confound the enemies of Christ's divinity, we learn from S. Irenæus, de Scrip. Eccl. in Joan. S. Epiphanius, Hær. 51 and others.

Of his epistles, the first was written to the Parthians: the other two were addressed to his particular friends, Gaius and Electa. Towards the end of his life, he was extremely feeble; unable to walk, he was carried on a litter to the assemblies of the faithful; whom he exhorted to love one another: (1) "my little children, he would say, love one another:" his auditors, tired of hearing continually the same thing, asked why he repeated those words so often? Because, he replied, charity is the precept of the Lord: with which, if you comply, you fulfil the law. He died in the hundredth year of his age: and was buried at Ephesus: (2) several miracles were wrought at his tomb. With the name of St. John, the Greeks have associated the epithet of "The Divine:" on account of the majestic dignity with which he expresses himself concerning the incarnate word. We are informed, that

(1) Hieronym. de scrip. Sacra.

(2) Hier. de Scrip. Eccl. in Joan. Polycrates ap. Euseb. 1 Hist. 25. Tertull. de anima. cap. 50. There were not wanting some to imagine that S. John did not die: but was taken away with Enoch and Elias: but Eusebius and S. Chrysostom completely refute this opinion when they assert that his tomb was to be seen in their times.

he was accustomed to wear a plate of gold, upon his forehead. A similar plate was worn by St. James, bishop of Jerusalem; and probably by all the first pontiffs, after the example of the high priest of the ancient law. With St. John, the apostolic times conclude: all the other apostles having died before him.

The blessed Virgin, who had been entrusted by Christ to his peculiar care, had quitted this world many years before him: but the precise time, and other circumstances of her death are unknown: her assumption into heaven, a few days after her decease, was universally believed, in the first age of the church. St. Epiphanius clearly professes this belief: and it has been embraced alike by all the Greek and Latin fathers. A solemn festival was instituted in commemoration of it, and celebrated through all the East: that festival is still solemnized by the whole church, on the fifteenth of August. (1)

(1) Concerning the "transit" of the blessed virgin, much has been written: of the opinions of various authors, some have been rejected by the Catholic church, as erroneous; others as apochryphal and visionary; and others, in fine, have been admitted. The church rejects especially the reveries of the Collyridiani and Antidicomarianitæ: of which, the former main

There was still remaining on earth a relative of the Saviour: this was Simeon, bishop Jerusalem. He was the last of the disciples, who had conversed with the *word made flesh*; and learned from him personally, the evangelical doctrine. He was of eminent service to the church; on account of the authority which he possessed; and the zeal which he exercised for the purity of faith, and rigour of discipline. But it was not long before he fell a victim to the persecution.

tained; that the blessed virgin was not human, but divine; and therefore exempt from death: the latter that like Enoch and Elias, she was translated, without dying, from earth to heaven. That she was subject to the common lot of all human kind, and died, was never doubted; that she was taken up into heaven with her body and soul after her death, was universally admitted by the church. This translation the Greeks called, "a sleed:" the Latins "*ASUMPTIO*," as appears from the most ancient martyrologies, the sacramentary of S. Gregory, and other ancient missals and rituals. That this festival was celebrated in the primitive ages, is plain from an epistle of pope Nicholas to the Bulgarians; in which, enumerating the fasts observed in the Latin church, he mentions the fast before the solemnity of the assumption of the blessed virgin Mary. There is, besides, extant, a sermon, attributed to S. Athanasius, in which the assumption is extolled in the highest strains. That the festival was admitted into Gaul in the time of Charlemagne, we learn from his celebrated Capitulary l. 1 c. 163. It was called by excellence *DIES DOMINÆ*. Cartuit. vit. S. Steph. Reg.

Nerva died after a reign of sixteen months : and was succeeded by his adopted son Trajan, on the twenty-seventh of January, in the year of Christ one hundred. This prince, notwithstanding his many good qualities, was the author of the third general persecution. His attachment to laws and superstitions of Rome, and the marked aversion which he testified for such as refused to conform to them, encouraged the idolatrous magistrates, unauthorized by any formal decree, to persecute the Christians.

The faithful having returned from Pella to Jerusalem, were permitted, under the direction of S. Simeon, to establish themselves again amid its ruins. Jealous of the privileges which they enjoyed, the Ebionites and Nazareans soon found means to introduce themselves among them.

Nazareans were originally circumcised Christians : but in consequence of their obstinate attachment to the observances of the old law, to which they wished to oblige even the gentiles themselves, they were separated from the church in the reign of Domitian. So great was their animosity against the followers of the new law, that they caused many to be apprehended and con-

demned to death. Among the victims of these fanatics was the venerable Simeon. He was denounced under the two-fold character of a Christian, and cousin-german to Jesus Christ. He was in his hundred and twentieth year : but his extreme age excited no pity in the ferocious governor : he was treated with the utmost cruelty, during many days in succession. The object of his executioner was to induce him by dint of torture, to sacrifice to the pagan gods : but Simeon not only continued resolute, but cheerful, in the most excruciating pain. Despairing of ever shaking his resolution, the governor condemned him to be crucified. Thus did the last eye witness of the Redeemer undergo a death to that of his Divine Master. (1) His successor in the see of Jerusalem was of Jewish extraction : his name was Justus.

A certain Thebulis had aspired to that dignity, and when he saw the preference given to Justus, his disappointment and chagrin, prompted him to abandon the church. Many other heretics appeared at the same epoch : to enter into a detail of all their visionary tenets, would be both

(1) Euseb. in chron. Idem. 4 hist. 1.

useless and tedious : I may, perhaps, however, be allowed to give a few particulars of the sect called Ossenians.

These heretics spread through Arabia, to the confines of Palestine. The person who reduced their reveries into a system was a Jew, by name Elxai. This man affected to have a more perfect knowledge, than any other mortal, of Jesus Christ : he drew a monstrous picture, in which he measured the extent of Christ's virtues, by the vast dimensions and strength of body, which he assigned to him. The moral conduct of this heretic was, in every respect, accordant with the principles of his doctrine : he was the avowed enemy of virginity and continence : and the apologist of fraud and dissimulation; he held himself free to profess, exteriorly, whatever religion he thought proper : to offer incense even to idols, provided his heart took no share in the prevarication. (1) The disciples of Elxai united with the Ebionites, and Nicholaites.

All these sects soon amalgamated into one : and became better known under the general de-

(1) Epiph. hier. 19 et 53. Philast. de hier. 82. Euseb. 6. hist. 31.

nomination of Gnostics; which signifies men versed in the things of God. Their impious maxims were of infinite prejudice to the true religion: as they all bore the name of Christian, they were frequently confounded by the idolators with the true children of the church: so that the most enlightened and liberal among the pagans could scarcely rise superior to the vulgar prejudices, unjustly conceived against Christianity on account of the horrible dogmas of the Gnostics.

Pliny, the younger, found a great number of the faithful in Bithynia, when appointed to the administration of that province: he scrutinized their conduct, and watched their proceedings with a censorious eye. The result of his observation is contained in his letter to Trajan: "he found them guilty, he says, of no other crime than of assembling at certain hours, to sing the praises of Christ, and to bind themselves never to be guilty of theft, adultery, or perjury." To this epistle, the emperor returned a most inconsistent and cruel answer: "If, said he, the Christians are brought before you, and refuse to offer incense to the gods, let them suffer death: otherwise let them live unmolested." Of this ir

sistency, Tertullian, in his apology, did not fail to take advantage. (1) If the Christians are guilty, this is his reasoning, why should they be permitted to live unmolested : but if innocent, why make them suffer death ?

Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, suffered martyrdom, during the reign of Trajan : (2) he was the successor of Evodius, who had been appointed to the see of Antioch, by the prince of the apostles. During forty years, he had been the edification of his flock : his extraordinary solicitude and zeal had preserved the purity of their faith, during the persecution of Domitian. The merit of Ignatius diffused itself from the bosom of his own church over all the East : and his authority defended the Christian societies, in those quarters, against the seductions of false brethren. Notwithstanding his great virtues, he had the most humble opinion of his own merit, and deemed himself unworthy of martyrdom, though it had been the object of his most fervent prayers, during two successive persecutions.

(1) Tert. apol.

(2) Euseb. in chron. et 3 hist. 30. Hieron. de script. Eccles. in Ignat. Methaphr. ap. Sur. 1 feb. Ado. in martyr. 1. Feb.

Trajan, in the eighth year of his reign, made an expedition into the East, against the Parthians : as his devotions to the gods was well known, particularly at a juncture when he believed their protection necessary, Ignatius trembled for the church. When the emperor arrived at Antioch, the "good shepherd" took the generous resolution to lay down his life for his flock ; hoping that a prince, so renowned for his clemency and humanity, would consider the death of their pastor a sufficient expiation for the aversion which the Christians evinced towards the gods of paganism. He, therefore, took no measures to conceal himself : and was soon brought before the emperor.

As soon as he appeared, "Wretch, cried Trajan, is it you, who, like an evil demon, seduce the citizens, and excite them to violate my orders?" "The name of demon, Ignatius calmly replied, has never, until now, been given to Theophrastus ; whose presence puts the demons to flight. If you call me a wicked demon because I am insupportable to demons, I will glory in the name. By the virtue of Jesus Christ, whom I carry in my heart, while he is at the same

time, enthroned in the highest heaven, we dissipate the illusions of hell." And who is this Theophorus, resumed the emperor? "It is he," replied Ignatius, to whom that title has so often been given: a title so conformable to the fervour of faith and charity, which he professes: it is he, who carries in his heart, Jesus Christ, the true Son of God." You persuade yourselves, then, said Trajan, that we do not feel in our souls the impressions of those great divinities, who render us victorious over all our enemies. It is a pernicious error, rejoined the saint, to mistake for gods, those evil spirits, whom the Greeks have deified. There is but ONE GOD; who created the heavens and the earth: and whose only Son is Jesus Christ. What! exclaimed Trajan, do you mean him, whom Pilate crucified, at Jerusalem? The very same, answered Ignatius: but by his crucifixion, he overcame sin, and the devil the author of sin. Trajan then pronounced the following sentence. It is our will, that Ignatius, who says he carries the crucified man in his heart, be put in irons and conveyed to Rome, to be devoured by wild beasts, for the amusement of the people. On hearing the sentence, Ignatius

said : I give thee thanks, God of love, for granting me the privilege of suffering for thy name, like thy holy apostles. He then offered up a short prayer for the church ; and presented his hands to be fettered by the guards.

He was compelled to set out for Rome without delay. During the voyage he was treated with extreme cruelty.

At Smyrna, he had the consolation to meet St. Polycarp bishop, who had also been a disciple of St. John. Of the epistles which he wrote during his voyage, seven are still extant : and are among the most precious fragments of sacred antiquity. (1)

On the arrival of the venerable bishop at Rome, the faithful went out in crowds to meet him. When they heard of his impending fate, they wept bitterly, and earnestly intreated him to allow them to petition the emperor for a re-

(1) Some errors had crept into these epistles, through the neglect of copyists : but they were restored to their original purity by two celebrated protestant divines, Daillé a Calvinistic minister of Charenton and doctor Pearson, the learned bishop of Chester. The original text discovered by Vossius, in the library of Florence, was found to be perfectly conformable to the British versions.

prieve. But the saint with a holy severity reproved their mistaken affection, and conjured them not to wrest from him that greatest of all favours, for which he had sighed so long. (1)

(1) The following is an extract from the letter addressed to the faithful, on this occasion :

“I dread your charity : and fear lest your compassion in my regard, be too tender. It may perhaps, not be difficult for you to prevent my death ; but in opposing my death, you oppose my happiness. If you have a sincere charity for me, you will let me go and enjoy my God. Never shall I have a more favourable occasion, than that which is now presented, of uniting myself to him : nor *you* of performing a good work : to perform that good work, you need only remain quiet. If you make no exertion to rescue me from the hands of the executioner, I will soon be united to my God. But if you suffer yourselves to be actuated by a false compassion for this miserable flesh, you will force me to return to my former career of labour and cares. Suffer me to be immolated now that the altar is prepared : unite with me in the sacrifice, singing canticles to the Father, and Jesus Christ his Son, while I am offering it. You have never borne envy against any one : could you now envy *my* felicity : rather obtain for me by your prayers, the courage necessary to resist the assaults of within, and to repel those of without. It is little to appear to be a Christian, if we are not so in effect : a Christian looks not for favourable appearances, but for magnanimity and solid virtue. I have written to the churches, that I may meet death with joy, provided you do not oppose it.

Suffer me to be the food of lions and bears : it is the shortest way to heaven : rather sharpen their appetite, that they may leave nothing of me that can fall into the hands of any one.

Approaching the amphitheatre, he heard with firmness and composure, the roar of the impatient beasts. His sufferings were soon over: the lions devoured him in a moment, and no relics, except a few of his larger bones, were saved. His martyrdom took place in the year one hundred and ten, on the twentieth of December. "We have been ourselves spectators of that heroic death, say the witnesses of the acts of his martyrdom, but not without shedding torrents of tears and beseeching the Lord to support our weakness."

The chair of St. Peter, was now filled by St. Evaristus, successor to S. Anacletus. To this pontiff some ecclesiastical writers attribute the

When the world shall see no remnant of my body, then shall I be in truth the disciple of Jesus Christ. Obtain for me the grace to be received by the Lord as a pleasing victim. Nothing makes any impression on me: every thing I regard as perfectly indifferent, except the hope of possessing God. Let the fire reduce me to ashes: let me die a slow and painful death upon a cross: let my limbs be ground to dust, let my body be boiled; I will suffer all with patience, provided I can enjoy Jesus Christ. The possession of all the kingdoms of the earth could not render me happy; and it is infinitely more glorious to die for Jesus Christ, than to reign over all the world."

establishment of regular parishes in Rome. (1) He was succeeded by St. Alexander, who was in his turn succeeded by St. Sixtus, and St. Sixtus by S. Telesphorus, a Greek, who, according to the express testimony of St. Irenæus, suffered martyrdom. This order of succession appears certain, but the duration of the several pontificates is unknown.

Of the church of Jerusalem, there were six bishops, in the short space of thirteen years. From this circumstance we may form an idea of the character of Trajan's persecution. The heads of the churches were, every where, sought after, and punished with unrelenting cruelty. In this persecution St. Onesmus, bishop of Ephesus and disciple of St. Paul, received the crown of martyrdom. (1)

(1) In the book de Rom. Pontiff. we read that Evaristus "Titulos in urbe Roma divisisse Presbyteris." By *Titulos* must be understood certain specified churches. The same book adds "Evaristum Septem Diaconos instituisse qui custo dirent episcopum prædicantem." They were afterwards called *DIACONI REGIONARII*, as it was their duty to preside over seven separate districts, and in the Roman council held under S. Sylvester, they are styled *DIACONI CARDINALES* Conc. Rom. 2. cap. 7.

(2) Martyr. Rom. 10 Feb.

Although the oriental provinces were the principal theatre of the sufferings and death of the Christians, in every other part of the empire, thousands were, at the same time, crowned with martyrdom. St. Crescens, disciple of the apostles, was martyred at Vienna, in Gaul : and St. Zacharias, his successor, in the same place : in the environs of Rome, St. Hyacinthus, and many other Christians fell victims to the rage of the idolatrous people. It is probable, that St. Cæsarius, deacon of Taragona, suffered at the same time ; as also Zozimus and Rufus, who had accompanied St. Ignatus to Rome.

In Syria, the blood of the Christians was shed more copiously. St. Barsimæus, bishop of Edessa, suffered with S. S. Sarbelius and Barbea, (1) whom he had converted. St. Eudoxia suffered at Heliopolis in Phœnicia. The Greeks record an infinite number of miracles, wrought through her intercession. There occurred, at this epoch, in Syria, a tremendous earthquake, which arrested, for a time, the fury of the persecution. (2) A more alarming or destructive shock

(1) Martyr. et Monel. 29 et. 30 Jan. (2) Dio in Traj.

has perhaps never been recorded in the annals of nations.

The description of it given by Dio, is truly terrific: the capital of Syria was buried under its ruins: and of the many thousand inhabitants which it contained, but few individuals escaped uninjured. Every circumstance connected with this terrible catastrophe, was impressed with the seal of the Divine vengeance. The historian makes no particular mention of the fate of the Christians of Antioch. It is probable that having been prophetically warned of the impending danger, they fled, like their brethren of Jerusalem: it is at least certain, that Hero, bishop of Antioch, survived, and continued to govern his church many years after this calamitous event.

The millenian system still continued to be popular: and was, in some degree, sanctioned by St. Papius, a man of rare simplicity, and his disciple St. Irenæus.. (1) From some misunderstood

(1) Gibbon, whose language on the subject of religion appears to be that of a pagan rather than a Christian, inadvertently drops a sentiment which I think ought to be frequently inculcated, and never forgotten: "It is an honourable circumstance, he says, for the morals of the primitive Christians, that even

or misapplied passages of the apocalypse and the epistles of St. John, they concluded that the just after the general resurrection, should reign a thousand years on earth: being in a kind of noviciate for immortality; and gradually preparing themselves for the intuitive fruition of God. (1) In this sense, the error had not yet been condemned by the church. By the millenarian heretics it was understood in a gross and voluptuous sense: repugnant alike to the spirit of religion and the holiness of God. In rejecting the former error, the church has taught us that the traditions even of the saints themselves should not be admitted indiscriminately: that none should be adopted, but such as are stamped with the seal of her approbation.

Towards the close of the reign of Trajan, the East was thrown into confusion by a desperate insurrection of the Jews. Under the conduct of a daring leader, they spread devastation around; massacred many of the pagans and burned or pillaged their houses.

their faults, or rather errors, were derived from an excess of virtue." This was certainly the case with S. Papias and S. Irenæus, with respect to the millenium.

(1) Euseb. 3 hist. 33.

The emperor gave orders to Lucius Quintus, governor of Mesopotamia, to quell the revolt, in that quarter : and a vast multitude of Jews in Mesopotamia paid the forfeit of their daring attempt, by a cruel death. Thus, while the church was every day becoming more flourishing, in the midst of persecution and tribulation, the synagogue was hurrying apace to inevitable destruction.

Shortly after these disastrous events, Trajan died : and was succeeded by Hadrian his cousin-german, in the year of Jesus Christ 119. This emperor was not more favourable to the Jews, than his predecessor ; but the power of that expiring nation, presenting no cause of alarm or uneasiness to the Roman people, the desire of revenge was forgotten in contempt. It was a great misfortune to the church, that the Romans confounded the Jews with the Christians. It was this mistaken notion which proved the principal cause of the persecution, in the reign of Hadrian. If this emperor has not been reckoned, by Eusebius, among the persecutors of the church, it is because he published no formal

edict against it : (1) but merely suffered the flame to be fanned, which had been kindled in the preceding reign. The aversion which Hadrian entertained for any other than the popular religion ; his passion for divination, astrology, and magic, exceedingly prejudiced him against the sincere adorers of the true God : especially as they were also confounded, not only with the Jews, but also with the different sects of Gnostics.

A swarm of fanatics, under this appellation, had lately spread themselves through the empire authorising and encouraging the most shocking vices. Saturninus, Basilides, and Carpocras, three celebrated heresiarchs, began to dogmatize at the same time : they had been formed by Menander, the disciple of Simon Magus : and blended in one monstrous compound the dogmas and morality of the gospel, with the chimeras and immoralities of paganism. (2) Saturninus maintained, that the union of marriage was impure and damnable : (3) Basilides advanced, that the

(1) Tertul. ap. c. 3. (2) Vide Euseb. 3 hist. 26.

(3) Iren. lib. 1 c. 12.

body of Jesus Christ was incorporeal : and that he was not truly crucified. (1) Carpocras regarded the Saviour as a mere man, distinguished only by his eminent virtues. (2) All these different sects of Gnostics or Illuminati, as they sometimes called themselves, laid it down as a fundamental principle, that it is useless, and even forbidden, to resist concupiscence : they adduced passages of scripture to justify their crimes : insisting that the flesh was an enemy, to which we should yield, in the course of this life.

Carpocras had a disciple named Prodicus, who became the father of the sect of the Adamites : (3) they pretended to imitate the life of Adam and Eve, during their innocence in the garden : and lived in criminal connexions. Carpocras had a son, who though he lived only to his eighteenth year, was far more infamous and abandoned than his father. After his death he was honoured as a God : and in a temple, erected to him, sacrifices and libations were offered in his honor.

(1) Iren. lib. 1 c. 23. (2) Euseb. 4. hist. 7.

(3) Theodor. l. hæc. Epiph. hæc. 52.

The Gnostics soon branched out into innumerable sects; of these the principal were the Valentinians: who, besides a visionary system of religion compiled from the philosophers, and especially from Plato, maintained the inamissibility of grace: the Sethians, from the respect they evinced for Seth, the son of Adam: the Cainites who professed to honor Cain, and the bad men whom the scriptures condemn: in fine, the Ophits, who paid supreme honors to the serpent as to the Saviour of mankind. All these sects are a lamentable proof of the weakness of the human mind, and the corruption of the human heart.

In consequence of the shameful excesses of the Gnostics, the most unjust calumnies were every where propagated against the Christians; for the pagans knew not how to discriminate between them, and the wicked sects, who had assumed the same denomination. They charged them, (and the Jews were the principal authors of this new calumny) with laying on a table, and covering with flour, an infant, which the proselyte, on his initiation, was obliged to kill; and from motives of interest, induced

to reveal the ceremony. The credulous multitude readily believed the imputation : and men who should have been superior to prejudice, contributed to increase it.

In this reign, according to some authors, but according to others, in that of Trajan, St. Eustachius, with all his family suffered for the faith : (1) St. Sophia, so famous in the East, was martyred with her three daughters : St. Faustinus, priest, and St. Jovita, deacon, were immolated, about the same time, with a number of other Christians. St. Symphorosa, with her seven children, rendered heroic testimony of the faith, in presence of Hadrian, and were all put to death. The bodies of the seven brothers were thrown into a deep pit. When the persecution ceased, these martyrs were transferred from Tivoli, where they had suffered, to Rome ; and buried within eight miles of the city.

The many and grievous calumnies circulated, and the ferocious and unrelenting cruelty exercised, against the Christians, elicited several apologies in their defence and vindication. Of

(1) Act. Eustach. et. Socior, ap. Sur. tom. 5.

these, the first was written by Quadratus, a disciple of the apostles. It was addressed to Hadrian : its principal object was to prove, that the miracles of Jesus Christ, the certainty of which was seldom disputed, were not the effect of magic and sorcery : and that the sick whom he cured, and the dead he raised to life, lived long after the death of their adorable benefactor. Throughout this excellent production, we cannot but admire the deep and elegant reasoning of Quadratus.

A second apology was presented by Aristides, an Athenian philosopher : this, according to the opinion of contemporary writers, was still more eloquent and erudite than the former. It is not extant. The proconsul of Asia remonstrated with the emperor on the injustice of putting to death peaceful citizens, without a crime ; after which the persecution began to relent.

The woes of the Jewish people were, about this period, brought to their consummation. The emperor Hadrian conceived the design to raise Jerusalem from its ruins : and accordingly rebuilt it, under the name of *Ælia*, which was that of his family. On the site where the Jew-

ish temple had formerly stood, he erected an altar to Jupiter : (1) and forbade any Jew, who would not dispense with circumcision, to dwell in Judea. This condition roused the indignation of the Jews : they soon collected together from every quarter of the East, and stimulated by some daring and rapacious adventurers, broke into open insurrection. Rufus, the governor, marched against them at the head of his disciplined troops ; and every engagement strewed the fields with the bodies of the unfortunate Israelites. (2)

Their lands were confiscated ; Israel, as the prophet had foretold, was literally without a “ vineyard and a harvest,” as well as without a “ temple and a pontiff.” Julius Severus put the finishing stroke to this war. Five hundred and eighty thousand perished by the sword ; and the number of those who were carried off by famine and other calamities, is incalculable. The wretched survivors were sold like beasts, in the valley which Abraham, the father of Israel, had once inhabited.—Thus did this unfor-

(1) Dio in Had. (2) Euseb. in chron. et. 4 hist. 6.

fortunate nation find their grave in the very place which had been the cradle of their ancestors. They were dispersed; without, however, being confounded with other nations: without liberty; without laws; without an altar; and without a sacrifice.

After the entire reduction of Palestine, the church of Jerusalem enjoyed tranquillity and peace. Mark, a gentile, was consecrated bishop of that see; and was the sixteenth in succession, after the establishment of Christianity. (1) This great event took place toward the close of Hadrian's reign, in the year of Christ 137. For the greater confusion of the Jews, the Romans placed a marble hog, in derision of their abstinence from the flesh of that animal, over the gate of the city that looked towards Bethlehem. (2) They also erected a statue of Venus, on Mount Calvary, on the very spot where the Redeemer was crucified: an idol of Jupiter over the tomb from whence he had arisen; and another of Adonis in Bethlehem.

(1) Euseb. in chron. et. 4. hist. 4. (2) Hier. ep. 13 ad Paul. Ambr. in Ps. 43.

But this was a transient triumph for idolatry ; the standard of the cross soon waved over the thrones of the Cæsars, and the mighty capital of the pagan world. (1)

(1) Paulin ep. 11 ad. Lev.

CHAPTER III.

EMPERORS.

ANTONINUS PIUS.
MARCUS AURELIUS.
LUCIUS VERUS.
COMMODOUS.
PERTINAX.
JULIANUS.
SEVERUS.
CARACALLA.
GETA.

POPES.

ST. TELESOPHUS, CONTINUED.
ST. HYGINUS.
ST. PIUS.
ST. ANICETUS.
ST. SOTER.
ST. ELEUTHERIUS.
ST. VICTOR.
ST. ZEPHYRINUS.

From the dispersion of the Jews, anno 137, to the end of the fifth persecution. Anno 211.

THE emperor Hadrian died at Tivoli, on the tenth of July, in the sixty-second year of his age, and in the year of Christ 140: he was succeeded by Antoninus, who was a philosopher; and having more accurate ideas of the Supreme Being, than the other pagans, he esteemed the purity of the Christian worship, and the great virtues which it produced. St. Justin, who was also a philosopher, but had been

verted to the true faith, presented to this emperor an apology, in favour of the Christian religion.

St. Justin was born in Palestine ; had received a finished education, and was versed in every science. He himself informs us of the manner of his conversion, in a dialogue with the Jew Tryphon, after having long devoted himself to the investigation of truth, and sought it in vain, among the different pagan sects. He was one day musing on the sea shore, in silent meditation, when he perceived by his side, a venerable old man, upon whose countenance was blended suavity with majesty. I stopped, says Justin, and looked at him, without daring to address him. He expressed his surprise at the notice I seemed to take of him ; and soon entered into a very interesting conversation. After praising the zeal which I had evinced in the search after truth, he reproached me with preferring speculation to practice : I respectfully asked what he would have me do : you must, he replied, meditate on the books of the Jewish prophets, the only true philosophers : and implore without ceasing, the Supreme Being to open to you the

gates of light and truth.” The study of the sacred books soon convinced Justin, of the follies of paganism : he compared them with the sanctity of the religion of the Christians ; and disabused of the calumnies published against the truth by the idolaters, he embraced the faith of Jesus Christ with his whole heart. He retained, after his conversion, the philosopher’s gown : and made frequent excursions to the East to diffuse the light with which his own soul was replenished : he opened a school for religious disputations, at Rome : and invited both Jews and gentiles to attend his instructions.

In addressing his apology to the emperor, the senate, and the Roman people, he omitted no circumstance by which he might be recognised : so firmly was he attached to his principles, so superior to all the dangers, to which his faith might expose him. Of this contempt for the opinions of men, he gave a striking proof in his apology : “ You are called,” said he, addressing himself to Antoninus and his presumptive heirs, Aurelius and Verus, “ You are called “ Pious” and “ Philosophers,” by the whole world ; that is, lovers of truth and justice : and your conduct

will soon prove how far you are deserving of these titles. We demand justice, not so much for our own sakes, as for your real interest ; to us the loss of liberty or life will be no real detriment ; whilst you, though masters of the world, will tarnish the lustre of your virtues, and be condemned at the judgment seat of the Eternal, if you punish us through passion or through prejudice. The legal forms of justice require, that an exact investigation be made into the conduct of the accused, and that sovereigns pass sentence according to the invariable rules of equity and wisdom ; not on mere presumption, or through caprice, or through arbitrary power. It is, therefore, our duty to explain our manner of life and doctrines : if not to escape death, which the Christian regards as a blessing, at least not to be accomplices in your criminal ignorance ; for which we should be responsible, if when we have it in our power, we neglect to enlighten you."

He then dwells, at full length, on the conduct of the faithful : the angelic purity of their manners, and the holy simplicity of their religious

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observances. The Christians were accused of atheism : this charge he refutes : and shews that atheism consisted, not in refusing incense and adoration to a plurality of absurd divinities, but to the One, ^{the}supreme and eternal being, creator and preserver of the universe ; whom the Christians more than any other people, endeavoured to honour as he deserves to be honoured ; and in that manner which he has taught them by means of his Son, *eternal and omnipotent like himself*, but clothed in human flesh for man's instruction and redemption.

Here to convince the pagans of the necessity of revelation, the holy apologist employs the testimony of the prophets, and the sibyls ; with other proofs adapted to his subject, and the genius of his age in which he lived. Prejudice in particular he labours to remove : as it formed the greatest obstacle to the progress of Christianity. To effect this he enters into an explanation of the religious ceremonies and even of the sacraments ; although it was forbidden to speak of them to the idolaters. He clearly and explicitly defines the sacrament of the eucharist ; as the shafts of calumny and ridicule had princip^{al}

ly been levelled at that article of the Christian faith.

“Behold,” said he, “the manner, in which we admit those whom you call the initiated : when the catechumen has been washed in the regenerating water, as an emblem of that interior purity with which his soul is adorned by celestial virtue, we conduct him to the place where the brethren are assembled in prayer. The prayer being ended, we salute him with the kiss of peace : then we present him who officiates, with bread and a chalice containing wine mingled with water. He offers it to the eternal Father in the name of the Son and the Holy Ghost : the deacons, after this, distribute the bread and wine to every one of the faithful, which they receive under the species of ordinary food : for as we know, that the Son of God has clothed himself with flesh and blood, so do we also know, that this nourishment, consecrated by the sacred formulas, which he himself has transmitted to us, become the *flesh* and *blood* of Christ, made man through love of us. Because the apostles teach, in their writings, that he commanded them to do with that bread and wine as

he had done, when after having taken the bread and blessed it, he said, THIS IS MY BODY ; and the wine, saying, THIS IS MY BLOOD ; he added, do this in commemoration of me.

“ But why so much pains to justify our conduct ? Those very persons who load us with criminal imputations, do not themselves believe these charges grounded : they tolerate religions the most foolish and corrupt, whilst they enkindle against us the fires of persecution : they do not punish the adorers of stones, of cats, and of crocodiles : no, not even wicked Christians, who are unworthy the name : the followers of Simon Magus, of Menander, of Marcion. What injury does our doctrine bring upon the state, that you should resemble, in your hatred of our religion, those wicked demons, to whom we are insupportable ? If it appear to you absurd, let it fall of itself : if it be pure, and holy, and divine, how rash, how dangerous to oppose it. You have it in your power to persecute us : and when the decree is passed, we shall patiently reply : “ The will of God be done : ” for this is the respect which our religion teaches us to render to our legitimate rulers. But we must

first declare to you, and that too in the name of the sovereign King of kings and emperors, whose throne is in the heavens, that you shall not escape the rigour of his judgments, if you persist in acting towards his disciples, with such glaring injustice."

We are informed by Orosius, one of the most ancient ecclesiastical writers, that this apology made a deep impression on the mind of Antoninus : and induced him to favour Christianity. He wrote to the governor in the East, against whom the faithful had sent their complaints, ordering him to suspend the persecution of the Christians. The letters which he sent to his lieutenants in Asia, have been preserved by (1) St. Melito and Eusebius. It is gratifying to the Christian reader to reflect on the encomiums which he bestows on the bishops of the church.

He reproached the idolaters with the cowardice which they manifested, when visited by any public calamity, such as earthquakes or pestilence : and when they imputed these misfortunes to the vengeance of the gods against the

(1) Mel. ap. Euseb. iv. 26.

Christians, Antoninus vindicated the latter, and spoke with great respect of their devotion to the cause of virtue and religion.

If these representations, added he, be not sufficient, I decree in confirmation of the orders of my illustrious predecessor and father, that whoever is accused for no other crime than his religion, shall not only be acquitted, but his accuser be punished, according to the ordinary forms.

This rescript was published throughout all the provinces of Asia: the persecution abated, but was not entirely extinguished. There were so many motives for continuing the cry of persecution against the Christians, that they enjoyed a respite only in particular places: and we find many martyrs, even in the reign of Antoninus Pius.

St. Telesphorus, the ninth pontiff of the Roman church, suffered martyrdom under this emperor. He occupied the pontifical chair ten or eleven years: (1) and was succeeded by St. Hyginus: St. Hyginus by S. Pius: and S. Pius by

(1) Iren. lib. 3. cap. 3. Tertul. carm. cont. Marcion lib. 3. in fin. Anast. de Rom. Pontif.

S. Anicetus. Under the last mentioned pontiff, S. Hegesippus went to Rome, where he continued during the pontificate of S. Soter, until that of S. Eleutherius, which commenced in the year 179. He there wrote the history of the church from the passion of Christ down to his own times. It was composed in the style of the apostolic writings : some fragments are preserved by Eusebius : the work itself is lost. It appears that S. Hegesippus had made frequent excursions to the distant churches to ascertain their discipline, maxims and doctrine : and that he, every where, found them conformable to all the usages, and doctrines, handed down by the apostles.

“ From the first pillars of the church, (these are his words) to the present time, there is no episcopal see, which has not kept, with inviolable fidelity, what the prophets had prescribed, and what the Lord himself had preached.”

The emperor Antoninus, after having restored peace to the church, died at the age of seventy-four years, A. D. 163. He was succeeded by his two adopted sons Aurelius and Lucius Verus. Verus, after a reign of eight years, died, and left Marcus Aurelius sole master of the empire.

Whether viewed in the light of an emperor or a philosopher, Aurelius was deemed one of the greatest characters that Rome ever produced. He prided himself on being descended from Numa : and like his illustrious ancestor, professed an extreme attachment to the superstitions of paganism. Notwithstanding his wonted clemency, he treated the Christians with severity, and suffered them to be insulted and oppressed with impunity, in many of the Roman provinces.

Quadratus, proconsul of Asia, caused Eumani-as and ten other Christians to be devoured by wild beasts, in the amphitheatre at Smyrna. The sight of blood whetted the appetite of the populace : they cried aloud that the enemies of the gods should be exterminated, and Polycarp be immolated to their vengeance. This apostolic and venerable man, the disciple of St. John, did not confine his zeal to his own church of Smyrna, but visited the churches in Asia, and had travelled as far as Rome itself, to settle the time for the paschal celebration, and to oppose the heresy of Marcion, which was then making

dangerous inroads into the capital of the universe.

This arch-heretic was the more to be dreaded, as he pursued a different plan from all other false teachers, who had preceded him. He affected great austerity : obliged his followers to abstain from wine and flesh meat, and to perform frequent and rigorous fasts. He admitted no disciple, who did not make profession of continence ; and marriage he positively condemned. He believed in the two principles of good and evil ; afterwards more fully developed in the errors of the Manicheans, but which were first invented by this heresiarch. Marcion was the son of a bishop : but being excluded from the church for a sin against chastity, and refused absolution when he sought it, he publicly vowed to destroy, if possible, the religion which had treated him with so much rigour.

His first teacher was Cerdon, from whom he borrowed his sacrilegious notions of the Divinity. He denied the resurrection of the body : saying, that the body of Jesus Christ had been composed of particles or ingredients, taken from every planet. His principal disciple was Apel-

les : who was induced, from a similar cause, to abandon the church and attack the truth : conscious of his miserable condition, he knew no better consolation, than to draw after him, into the same abyss, as many victims as possible. Pressed by the arguments of one Rhodonius, an orthodox doctor, he asserted that it was useless to investigate the subject of religion.

Marcion was at Rome, when S. Polycarp arrived : (1) meeting the holy bishop, he asked whether he knew him : yes, replied Polycarp, I know thee to be the eldest son of Satan ; (2) and he immediately left the heresiarch, exclaiming : “ For what times, O Lord, hast thou reserved me ! ” Valentinus was also at Rome, at this same period. So great was the authority, so extraordinary the virtues, of Polycarp, that many, at his solicitation, abjured their errors, and returned to the bosom of the church : even the two heresiarchs did penance, and were re-

(1) Iren. lib. 3. cap. 3.

(2) Idem. *ibid.* Euseb. 4. hist. 13. The precise year in which S. Polycarp went to Rome is not known : according to Pearson, it was in 142 ; according to Tillemont in 164 ; but according to Eusebius in 157.

ceived into the communion of the faithful : but were soon rejected again, on account of their crimes.

When the presence of S. Polycarp was no longer necessary at Rome, he returned to Smyrna : a cruel persecution was now waged against his flock : and scarcely had he arrived, than Quadratus, the consul, sent a body of cavalry to arrest him : the faithful compelled him to retire into the country. But God had revealed to his servant the death that awaited him. Three days before he was taken, he told the disciples who accompanied him, that he should soon consummate his sacrifice by fire. The soldiers commissioned to arrest him, arrived at his retreat, at night, after the saint had laid down to rest. He had still an opportunity of escaping : but saying : "The will of God be done," he went out to meet them with a cheerful countenance. Struck at his venerable appearance, and the meekness with which he addressed them, the soldiers whispered, that it was pitiful to think, that they should have come in such numbers, and with such haste, to arrest so good an

old man : he had supper prepared for them : and while they eat, he was absorbed in prayer.

He was then put upon an ass, and conducted to the city. On his way, he was met by a magistrate by the name of Herod, who took him into his chariot, and endeavoured to persuade him to sacrifice : or at least call the emperor "lord." Polycarp, at first, was silent ; but, after a few moments, returned this answer : "I cannot do what you desire me : a Christian renders to princes, the respect which is due to their character : but never will he give them an epithet which belongs to God alone." At these words, Herod, throwing off the mask of friendship, thrust him from the chariot, with such violence, that his leg was much bruised by the fall. This did not prevent the holy bishop from advancing cheerfully to the amphitheatre, where the people were assembled. On entering it, he heard a celestial voice, saying, "Polycarp act courageously." (1)

He was presented without delay, before the proconsul, who exhorted him to respect his old

(1) *Fortis esto Polycarpe et exoelso animo rem gere.*
Spond. p. 156. lii.

age; to swear by the genius of Cæsar; and to cry aloud, away with the impious; meaning the Christians. Turning towards the pagan people, the saint exclaimed; ‘Away with the impious!’ The proconsul repeated: swear by the enemies of Cæsar; blaspheme Christ. Polycarp answered with a smile: “I have served him these four score and six years, and he has never done me any harm; but much good: how then could I blaspheme my King and Saviour? I am a Christian.” The proconsul threatened him with wild beasts and fire. Polycarp replied: bring *your* fire, it soon goes out: but there is a fire which is *never* extinguished: and in that shall the wicked be tormented. In a few moments a large pile was erected; the Jews were particularly active on this occasion; and when the executioner was about nailing the generous confessor to the stake, allow me, he said, to remain as I am: he, for whom I suffer, will give me grace and power to stand without being bound: they therefore contented themselves with tying his hands behind his back; and in this posture looking up to heaven, he prayed in the following manner: ‘O Almighty God, I

bless thee for having preserved me to this hour, that I may be numbered with thy martyrs and drink of the chalice of thy beloved son : wherefore, for all things, I praise and glorify thee, through the Eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, thy Son, with whom, to thee and to the Holy Ghost, be glory now, and forever. Amen.” Scarcely had he ended this prayer, than the fire was applied to the pile ; but the flames forming an arch, encircled, without injuring, the body of the martyr : and such was the fragrance, which was diffused around, that it seemed as if spices had been scattered in profusion on the flames. The exasperated idolaters pierced his body with a spear : it was then burned by the centurion. The relics of the holy martyr, “ more precious than gold or the richest jewels,” in the language of the acts of his martyrdom, were carefully gathered up, and deposited in the church of Smyrna, where his tomb is still shown and venerated in a little chapel. The reason assigned by the centurion for consuming the body, is remarkable : lest the Christians should adore it, instead of Jesus Christ ! “ not knowing, say the writers of these acts, that if we

adore Jesus Christ, it is only because he is the Son of God ; and that we love and respect the holy martyrs merely because they were the friends and imitators of Jesus Christ." Such were the sentiments of the primitive church on the nature of the veneration paid to the martyrs and their relics. The principal disciples of St. Polycarp, were St. Pothinus, and St. Iræneus, whom he sent, accompanied by some other disciples, to preach the gospel in Gaul.

Of the epistles of St. Polycarp, that to the Philippians is the only one now extant ; and is a standing proof of the apostolic spirit with which he was animated. He exhorts them to "be watchful in prayer lest they be led into temptation ; to be constant in fasting, glorifying by their sufferings, the Lord Jesus Christ." So great was the respect in which it was held, that after his death it was publicly read in the Asiatic churches. (1)

St. Felicitas and her seven sons received the crown of martyrdom in the same reign. In vain did Publius, prefect of the city, endeavour

(1) Hier: in Polycarp.

by threats and promises, to induce her to offer sacrifice. "No," said the holy woman, "the spirit of God renders me superior to seduction; you may deprive me of my life, but death is the road to victory." On the following day, the prefect ascended the tribunal, and Felicitas was brought before him. He conjured her to have pity, at least on her children, if she was insensible to her own sufferings; "such compassion," she replied, "would be the worst of cruelty." Then turning to her children, she pointed to heaven, saying: it is there, that Jesus Christ expects you with his saints, who have traced out that path, and consecrated it with his blood." Her seven children were then put to death before her eyes; and after them she crowned, by her own martyrdom, the glorious sacrifice. (1)

St. Ptolomæus and St. Livius suffered about the same time. Justin, who was then at Rome, indignant at the crying abuse of Justice, (since it had been made by the emperor a capital crime to denounce the Christians, merely on account

(1) Ap. Sur. 10 Jul.

of their religion) drew up a second apology, which he addressed to the emperor, the senate, and the Roman people. If they persisted in their ancient prejudices, he entreated them at least to give the Christians an opportunity to prove their innocence, and to read before the people, the sacred book in which their doctrine was contained. "This doctrine," continues the apologist, "has nothing in it that deserves to be condemned : it is very different from the lessons of Epicurus, and other pagan writers, the reading of which is permitted to the whole world."

This second apology did not experience the same favourable reception as the first. M. Aurelius was, to an unusual degree of weakness, attached to the philosophers of his sect : and one of them, Crescens, a cynic, mortified by his defeat, in a conference which he had with St. Justin, exerted all his influence with the emperor, to have the defenders of the truth condemned. St. Justin had boldly confessed in his apology, that he expected death as his recompense ; and in a few days after, was apprehended, with a great number of Christians, his disci-

ples and fellow labourers. They were brought before Rusticus, prefect of Rome, who said aloud :—"Justin, obey the gods, and comply with the edicts of the emperor." Justin answered :—"No one can be blamed for obeying our Lord Jesus Christ." Rusticus : "What religion do you profess?" Justin : "I was born a pagan, I have tried all sects, and have finally preferred the Christian religion, so much despised by those who are unacquainted with it." Rusticus : "Art thou then infatuated with that superstition?" Justin : "Certainly; it is the only true path to happiness." Rusticus : "What are the tenets of the Christian religion?" Justin : "Christians believe in one God, Creator of the universe, and confess the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, foretold by the prophets, the Author of salvation, and Judge of mankind." Rusticus : "Where do the Christians assemble?" Justin : "Wherever they can; God is not confined to any place." Rusticus : "You are then, indeed, a Christian?" Justin : "I am."

The judge then put the same questions to each of his companions. They all answered,

that they were Christians. The prefect again addressed Justin : Do you who are so famed for eloquence, and who think that you possess the true philosophy, flatter yourself, that after being scourged from head to foot, you will ascend to heaven ? “ I know it, he replied, I cannot doubt it.” The martyrs were then led to execution, and with hymns of praise and thanksgiving, cheerfully made the sacrifice of their lives. (1)

St. Justin is one of the most ancient, and most venerable of the fathers of the church. His two apologies ; the second part of his treatise on the unity of God ; two discourses to the gentiles, and his interesting dialogue with the Jew Tryphon, are still extant.

At this period, the church was disturbed by the éxtravagant doctrines of the heretic Montanus. (2) He was a native of Phrygia ; and had been instructed in the Christian religion : he was ambitious of the episcopal dignity, from which, being at once a eunuch, and a Neophyte, he was excluded. His pride was wounded : and

(1) Martyrol. Rom. et alia 13 April. Menal. and Kal. Jun. Epiph. hæc. 46. (2) Euseb. in chron.

joining with two women, Priscilla and Maximilla, he broached the most absurd doctrines. The female associates were rich, and soon debauched a number of avaricious and unprincipled followers. The first use which they made of the pretended gifts of the Holy Spirit, was to separate from their husbands.

They preferred themselves to the prophets and apostles; and gave Montanus the name of the Paraclete; asserting that he was the third person of the Holy Trinity. They carried their impiety so far, as to maintain, that God, having failed to save the world, by the prophets, and even by the Incarnate Word, had descended into Montanus, Priscilla, and Maximilla.

The Montanists, affecting an extreme austerity of morals, scarcely admitted any sinners to penance: (1) their numbers increased in several parts of Asia; to check its progress effectually, the church condemned the new heresy. After which, impelled by the evil spirit, Montanus and Maximilla hanged themselves. Their errors still survived, and were embraced, as shall

(1) Tertull. adv. Prax. c. 1. Philast. de hæ. cap. 50. Epiph. hæ. 48.

soon appear, by some of the most learned men. This sect, like all others, built on the passions of men, branched out into several ramifications: some of the followers of Montanus became attached to one Proculus; others to Æschines, and many to a woman, named Quintilla, who carried the artifice of seduction so far, as to admit women to the priesthood and episcopacy.

At this same epoch, the impieties of Cere- thus and Ebion, against the Incarnate Word, were revived, by Theodotus of Byzantium. He had apostatized, during the persecution, and fled to Rome, where he hoped to conceal himself. But he was soon recognised: and when asked how a man, as learned as he was, could betray the truth; he replied: that he had not denied God, but Jesus Christ; who, he said, was, by nature, a man like himself.

He was soon surrounded by a crowd of disciples, who were called Alogi, or rejecters of the Word. They maintained that the apostles had transmitted this doctrine: that it was preserved in the church, till the time of pope Victor: and that the truth was corrupted by Zephyrinus, the fourteenth sovereign pontiff.

This is the account, given by a contemporary author, as Eusebius, whose testimony is unquestionable, assures us. (1) That author, whose name is at present unknown, proves the Divinity of the INCARNATE WORD, from that very tradition which the Alogi asserted to militate in their own favour. "Have we not, he says, innumerable hymns and canticles, which honour Jesus Christ, as the Word of God, and as God himself? Can our adversaries dare impute their doctrine to the very pontiff, who condemned Theodotus, the father of these apostates? And why do they quote the sacred scriptures, when they adulterate those oracles of truth, under pretence of correcting them? But, he continues, to cover them with confusion, it will be sufficient to compare the several copies which they have made: not only do these copies disagree with that which they all received, in the bosom of the true church, but they are even at variance with each other." By such invincible arguments, did he confound those innovators, who pretended that the Christian faith was not then such, as it

(1) Euseb. 5. hist. 15.

had been, from the commencement of the church.

Another Theodotus, posterior to him of Byzantium, was the author of the sect called Melchisedeckians, from their having raised Melchisedeck into a celestial virtue; the intercessor of angels, and superior to Jesus Christ, who they said, was only the mediator between God and men. (1)

Praxeas gave birth to the sect of Patripassionists, who attributed the passion and the sufferings of the cross to the Father, as well as to the son. (2)

Hermogenes, a painter and philosopher, gave a still wider range to the flights of his imagination. He left the church, and maintained that matter was eternal; that the devils would be one day re-united to this almost spiritual substance; and that the body of Jesus Christ was in the sun. He dogmatized in Africa. In Galatia Hermias and Saleucus supported the same opinion of the co-eternity of matter with God, with all the consequences which necessarily flowed from so ab-

(1) Tertull de præscript cap. ult. (2) Id. Ado. Prax. cap. 1

surd a theory : and that the soul of man was a vapour, created by the angels. For souls of such a texture, they concluded that the baptism of water was useless ; and consequently adopted, in its literal sense, the passage of St. John : “ He will baptize you in spirit and in fire.” They maintained, in like manner, that this world is hell, and that human generation is to be considered the only resurrection. (1)

Such errors and impieties roused all the zeal of the pious and learned teachers of the truth, so fully adequate to the task of arresting the progress of seduction. To the heresy of the Montanists we are indebted for the epistles of St. Denis, bishop of Corinth.

Besides that addressed to the Romans, he wrote many edifying letters to his suffragan bishops who ruled the churches of Gortyna, Lacedæmon and Athens ; but his pen was principally employed against the errors of Marcion. The bitter complaints which the holy bishop makes of the heretics, who corrupted his writings to give a sanction to their own errors, is a striking

(1) Orig. periar. lib. 1. et 2. Euseb. de praep. evang. lib. 7. cap. 8. 9.

testimony of the esteem, in which this learned father was held. (1) St. Jerom tells us, that he shewed, with as much eloquence as erudition, from what sect of philosophy every heresy broached in the church, had derived its origin.

St. Melito, bishop of Sardis, rendered himself equally illustrious in Asia, by a number of learned works : (2) all of which, with the exception of a few fragments, have been unfortunately lost. He gave a catalogue of the sacred books: the first noticed by ecclesiastical writers, in an address to Aurelius the Roman emperor : whom he conjured to put an end to the countless martyrdoms, caused by the indiscriminate fury of the pagans : he also reminded him that no edict had ever been published against the Christians, except by the worst of tyrants, Nero and Domitian.

St. Athenagoras, a celebrated apologist of Christianity, flourished at the same period. He had been converted from paganism to the true faith, and his piety extorted great respect, even from his calumniators, for the Christian virtues.

(1) Euseb. 4 hist. c. 22. (2) Euseb. 4 hist. c. 25.

His apology is characterized by strong reasoning, and noble eloquence: it contains an accurate and profound explanation of the most sublime mysteries of religion. Whether such powerful arguments made any impression on the emperor's mind, is not known. An astonishing event, however, took place a few years after, which is fully authenticated by Eusebius, (1) and Dion of Halicarnassus. (2) The emperor was engaged in a war with the Germans and Sarmatians; his army surrounded on the arid mountains of Bohemia, by the Quadi, one of the tribes of those nations, was reduced by heat and thirst to the last extremity. There were in the Roman army many Christians, who addressed their prayers to heaven for relief, in sight of the enemy, who mocked, and were preparing to attack them. Their prayers were not disregarded: rain fell in torrents, on the side of the Romans, who received the refreshing shower in their helmets; whilst whole battalions of the barbarians were beaten down, by hail and thunder. The Romans gained a decisive victory; to perpetuate the re-

(1) *Euseb. chron.* an. 174. (2) *Dion. epitom.* in. M. Aur.

membrance of which they erected at Rome, a magnificent monument; which is standing at the present day, and is called the pillar of Antoninus. The pagans, it is true, generally attributed the miracle to the Gods; but the emperor, ascribed it exclusively to the prayers of the Christians. His letters to the Roman senate, which were extant in the time of Tertullian, sufficiently attest his conviction of the power of Jesus Christ. He gave the name of the "thundering legion" to the Christians who had gained him so extraordinary a victory; and forbade any one, under the severest penalties to accuse, persecute, or molest them, in any way.

This did not, however, prevent the death of many Christians in a general commotion, excited three years later, by the pagans. Of these, Gaul was the principal theatre. The faith had been carried to that country in the first age by the disciples of the apostles. St. Crescens, who, as St. Epiphanius and Theodoret assure us, was sent by Saint Paul to preach the gospel in Transalpine Gaul, was the first bishop of Vienna. The foundation of an episcopal church at Arles, by Trophimus, a disciple of St. Paul, was prior

to that of Vienna, and rests on authority still more unquestionable. From that city, which received its first bishop from the apostles themselves, the light of faith was communicated to the other provinces. (1)

Towards the middle of the second century, St. Pothinus, a disciple of St. Polycarp, passed from Italy into Gaul, and fixed his see in the city of Lyons. The progress of the gospel under this saint, and those that accompanied him, soon attracted the attention, and inflamed the jealousy, of the pagans. They waited an opportunity to wreak their vengeance on the professors of the new religion; and this was furnished by the concourse assembled at Lyons, according to custom, every fifth year, to celebrate the public games.

They began by imputing the most horrid crimes to (2) the Christians, and forbidding them to enter any public, or even private houses, except such as belonged to themselves, or those of their own communion. From this, they advanced to still more heinous insults. They plundered the houses of the Christians: and seized,

(1) Vid. Spondan. p. 58. an 46. I.

(2) Ep. Mart. Vien. et Ludg.

with rapacious hands, and indiscriminate rage, on their possessions. To every outrage, the Christians opposed meekness and patience; this return so enraged their persecutors, that they threw many into confinement, until the arrival of the governor: who caused the Christians to be tormented, on the bare suspicion of the crimes, with which the idolators had charged them.

A young Christian, named Epagathus, undertook to plead in behalf of the holy confessors. But the crowds which surrounded the tribunal, raised an unanimous cry against him: and the governor demanded whether he too were a Christian? Epagathus openly confessed his belief, and was soon added to the other sufferers for the faith. The fury of the people, and the governor, was principally directed against the deacon Sanctus, the Neophyte Maturus, and a female, by name Blandina. Several weak and pusillanimous brethren had scandalized and afflicted the holy confessors, by cowardly yielding in the hour of trial: and they trembled for this pious female. Her features were beautiful; her figure and whole person peculiarly interesting.

But the generous girl notwithstanding her exquisite sensibility, and the torments inflicted on her, astonished all by her constancy: her executioners, exhausted by fatigue, were obliged, to relieve each other, several times, during her long sufferings. They laboured to extort from her a confession of some or other crime which could reflect disgrace upon the Christians: but her only reply was: "I am a Christian: the Christians commit no crimes." The firmness of the deacon Sanctus provoked, no less, the rage of the unrelenting governor. Heated plates of copper were applied to his naked body: but amid all his sufferings, he remained immoveable without uttering a groan. In this mangled condition he was thrown into prison: and after a few days, the same inhuman process was repeated on him. But he continued resolute: and by a manifest interposition of heaven, his wounds became suddenly healed. (1)

After this, all the prisoners were thrown into a deep and filthy dungeon, where many of them perished in extreme misery.

(1) Greg. Tur. de glor. Martyr. cap. 49.

The venerable Pothinus was next apprehended. He was eighty years old; sick, and so feeble, that he was obliged to be carried to the tribunal. The governor asked him who was the God of the Christians. To this question the aged bishop replied: if you were worthy, you should know. Immediately the blows of the by-standers felled him to the ground: and being drawn, half dead, from the hands of the infuriated multitude, he was thrown into prison, where he expired two days after.

The other martyrs were then tortured with the refinements of the most wanton cruelty: and Blandina, having been long tormented, and borne her sufferings with a heroism for which the pagans could find no parallel, was at last burned: and her ashes, with those of forty-eight others, were cast into the Rhone. The remains of the amphitheatre in which they were martyred, are still to be seen on Mount Forviere, which derives its name from the Latin words Forum Vetus. The ancient city of Lyons was built on this mountain, and the Christians who suffered on this occasion were called the martyrs of Aisnay. Towards the year 120 St. Irenæus

succeeded St. Pothinus, in the see of Lyons. (1) He was born in Asia, and placed by his parents, under the direction of St. Polycarp. He likewise received lessons from Papias, a holy and celebrated teacher, though one of the principal authors of the Millenian system.

Irenæus made a deep study of the profane writers, in order to combat the pagans with their own weapons; or to confound the heretics, who were constantly appealing to the works of the philosophers.

Though worthy, on account of the sweetness of his disposition, of the epithet "pacific;" which the word Irenæus implies; he made the enemies of the faith tremble by his words and works. Never was there a juncture in which a pastor stood more in need of talents and virtue. The storm which had spread devastation through the church he was appointed to govern, was only slumbering; it soon broke forth with increased fury.

Two young men, Epipodius and Alexander, were its first victims. In their boy-hood, they

(1) Euseb. 5 hist. 8, Hier. ep. 84 ad Mag. et de scrip. Eccl. in Iren.

had contracted an intimate friendship, which the striking resemblance of their virtues cemented and increased. They were arrested together, continued firm under their torments, and received, on the same day, the palm of martyrdom.

S. Marcellus and Valerian suffered about the same time, and in the same place ; S. Severinus, S. Exuperius, and S. Felician, at Vienna.

But no martyrdom reflected more honour on the church, than that of a young man named Symphorian. He was descended from an illustrious Christian family ; and had received an education suitable to the nobility of his birth. His fellow citizens had assembled to celebrate the feast of Cybele ; for which impious worship, he openly testified his marked aversion. He was instantly carried before Heraclius, who held the office of judge. Heraclius asked if he were a Christian ; and when he boldly confessed the faith, the judge demanded why he had dared to express his disrespect for the mother of the Gods ? I have already told you, answered Symphorian, I am a Christian, and adore but one true and living God, who reigns in heaven : as to the

idol of Cybele, I would trample it in the dust. Heraclius being informed that he was a Roman citizen, ordered the decree of the emperor to be read. It was as follows: "The emperor Aurelius to all his officers and governors: we have learned that the laws are despised by those who are called Christians. Let such persons be arrested; and if they persist in their impiety, let them be put to death." The judge then said, what do you think of this, Symphorian? If you do not submit to the orders of the emperor, your disobedience to him, and the immortal gods, can be atoned for, only by your blood. The martyr replied, that he should never consider the idols in any other light, than as instruments used by Satan for the perdition of souls. Heraclius instantly commanded him to be beaten with clubs, and then remanded to prison. Two days after he was brought out of his dungeon, and despising every offer and every bribe held out to him by the judge, he was condemned to die by the sword. Symphorian heard the sentence with the liveliest joy. As he passed out of the town to the place of execution, his mother standing on the walls of the city, cried out to him: "My son,

Symphorian, remember the living God. Look up to heaven where God, who reigns for ever, waits for you." He suffered with courage; the faithful interred his body near a fountain, out of the common field of execution. His tomb became famous for miracles, and Euphonius, who, about the middle of the 5th century, became bishop of Autun, built over it a church, which he dedicated to God, under the patronage of the martyr.

St. Benignus, another disciple of St. Polycarp, who carried the faith into the West, together with Andochius, a priest, and Thyrses, a deacon, passed some years at Autun.—Both he and his fellow labourers terminated their apostolic career by a cruel and lingering martyrdom. An almost countless multitude of other martyrs fertilized that country with their blood, and imparted to its soil that spiritual fecundity which has since given birth to so many illustrious men.

The efforts of the heretics against the true religion, were still more fatal than the most bloody persecution. A set of Gnostics, headed by Blastus and Florinus, disciples of Valentinus,

carried their errors into Gaul. (1) St. Irenæus exerted all his zeal, and all his talents, to oppose their progress. He composed two excellent treatises against Florinus. The object of the first was to prove a unity of principle; or that God was not the author of sin. The second was against the system of spiritual or ætherial being, invented by Valentinus. (2) This celebrated father published many other works, which have not come down to us; and of the former, only a few fragments are remaining. His work against heresies is extant only in a translation: but, though it must lose much of its original merit, it is nevertheless an invaluable treasure. It opens with a review of the visionary systems of Valentin.

Having laid down a profession of faith, in all its purity, such as was received from the immediate disciples of the Saviour; the symbol or creed drawn up by the apostles, and believed by all the Christian churches of the world; he contrasts in a luminous manner, the uniformity of this faith, with the innumerable variations of the

(1) Euseb. 5. hist. 14. Theodor. hæc. fab. lib. 1. (2) Euseb. cap. 19

doctrines of all heretics, from Simon Magus
 down ~~with~~ ~~Valentinianus~~

Of all the heresies which he enumerates in the course of the work, he subjoins a refutation : shews the source from which error most commonly springs ; and proves, from experience, that ~~heresy~~ is generally the offspring of corrupt morals : he speaks of the regular succession of bishops ; and dwells particularly on the prerogatives of the see of Rome ; with which, he says, on account of its pre-eminence, and supremacy, the faithful, of every country, should be strictly united. Here he enumerates all the popes who had presided over that first and greatest of all sees. S. Peter, S. Linus, S. Cletus, S. Clement, S. Anacletus, S. Evaristus, S. Alexander 1, S. Sixtus 1, S. Telesphorus, S. Hyginus, S. Pius 1. S. Anicetus, S. Soter, and S. Eleutherius, who then filled the apostolical chair. He proves, by a series of conclusive arguments, the unity of God, the divinity of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. In fine, he establishes lucidly, the different tenets of our faith : such as original sin, free will, and the real presence of Jesus Christ in the eucharist. The belief of

the real presence is so clearly and distinctly shewn by him, that he considers it as a point altogether incontestable: and resting on this, which even his adversaries were obliged to admit, he confounds, with more facility the errors contrary to the other dogmas of faith.' "How, says the holy doctor, "will they be convinced that the eucharistic bread is the body of our Lord, and the chalice his blood, if they confess him not to be the son of the eternal." And against the Marcionites he says: "If the Saviour be not the son of the Almighty, how could he have declared that the bread was his body, and that the wine of the chalice was changed into his blood." All the other fundamental truths of religion, attacked in that, as well as in succeeding ages, are established with equal learning and precision in five books: which prove the uniformity of the Catholic faith in every age. With so many precious testimonies are, however, commingled some errors, flowing from remote principles, on which the church had not yet decided. He imagined, with the Millenians, that after the first resurrection, the souls of the just were to reign a thousand

years on earth with Jesus Christ. The same zeal which urged him to combat and refute the allegorical explanations given to certain parts of scripture by heretics, led him into the opposite extreme; and induced him to interpret too literally those texts, which relate to the glory of the church, and the happiness of the saints in heaven.

The emperor Marcus Aurelius survived the martyrs of Lyons only two years. The decline of his life was saddened by the inhuman disposition of his son Commodus, which now began to develope itself: and the indecent joy which that unnatural prince testified at the death of his father, seems to justify the suspicion of his having poisoned him.

Aurelius died in the 59th year of his age, and the 19th of his reign; A. D. 182. Commodus, though otherwise a second Nero, was favourable to the Christians. (1) A Courtezan by the name of Marcia, was the instrument which Providence made use of, to procure peace for the Christians,

(1) That he not only tolerated the Christians, but enforced the laws against their accusers, we learn from Euseb. lib. 5. cap. 21.

under a tyrant, who had spilled so much blood. This woman, notwithstanding the lewdness of her character, had a singular respect for Christianity, and swayed, at will, the heart of Commodus. Though the tempest darkened round them, the faithful daily multiplied. Not only the common people were converted; the most illustrious Romans were no longer ashamed of a crucified God.

The senator Apollonius rendered heroic testimony to the cause of truth in the Roman senate. (1) One of his slaves had accused him of being a Christian: and though the slave was put to death in virtue of the decree, passed by the emperor M. Aurelius, Perenius, the prefect of the city, judged it expedient that the case should be referred to the decision of the senate. The illustrious defendant was permitted to plead his own cause. He composed a beautiful apology, not only to make profession of, but to vindicate, the Christian faith. This apology he pronounced in presence of the assembled senators. As he could not be prevailed upon to abjure or dis-

(2) Hier. de script. Eccles.

guise his sentiments, the senate by a solemn decree, condemned him to lose his head. The sentence was executed in the eighth year of the reign of Commodus. Another senator, by name, Julius, suffered under the same emperor. [†] During this reign, Lucius, king of Great Britain, sent two deputies to Pope Eleutherius for missionaries. The Pope despatched Dumianus and Fugatius, by whom Lucius and his queen were baptized. At this period also, flourished St. Theophilus bishop of Alexandria, author of several works, highly esteemed for their erudition and elegance. Besides the treatise addressed to Autolycus, the only one now extant, he composed commentaries on the four principal prophets, and the four gospels, with a refutation of the errors of Marcion and Hermogenes. Autolycus was a learned pagan : and much prejudiced against the Christian religion. Theophilus, who had also been a pagan, wished to instruct, or silence him by this work. He divided it into three books ; which shew the follies of idolatry, while they establish the existence, providence, and infinite perfection, of the true God.

“ When, he says, we behold a vessel sailing on the ocean or entering into port, we do not doubt that it is guided by a pilot, though we cannot discern him : so should we believe, that a superior and infinitely wise being presides over the affairs, and regulates the destinies, of the universe, although this first mover is invisible to mortal sight. All believe there is an emperor, though many do not see him ; for his laws, his officers, and his images, make him known : and you refuse to believe in a God, announced by his works and by the splendid and multiplied effects of his power ! You are unwilling to believe what you cannot see : but does not every man rest satisfied in such belief, in the most important concerns of life ? What would the husbandman reap if he did not blindly commit his grain to the earth ? How could men cross the seas, without trusting to a pilot ? How could desperate maladies be cured, did not the patient subject himself to the skill of the physician ? What art, what science could be learned, if we did not begin with believing him who teaches us ?

In the second book, S. Theophilus relates, and defends the history of the creation given by Moses. As a living monument of the primitive and universal practice, he observes that all nations counted the week after the manner of the Jews : although this cycle of seven days was not founded on the revolution of any of the planets. In the same book, speaking of the nature of the divine persons, he makes use of the word TRINITY ; to mark the distinction of the three adorable persons.

His third book eloquently and forcibly refutes the calumnies circulated by the idolaters, against the Christians. In the wide field opened by this subject, Theophilus takes the noblest flights ; and proves triumphantly, that the prophets and apostles of Christianity were superior to the superstitious mythologists of paganism. He ended his career in peace under the emperor Commodus. The emperor perished by the hands of the celebrated Marcia, and some other accomplices, whose death he had meditated. Pertinax, a venerable old man, was raised to the throne : and was murdered three months after,

by the Prætorian soldiers, whose licentious manners he had attempted to reform.

After this outrage, they published that the empire was offered to the highest bidder: and the supreme power was actually purchased by Didius Julian, whose title was confirmed in the camp, contrary to the will of the people, and senate. He soon lost the dominion which he had so unworthily acquired. The soldiers themselves, disgusted with his avarice, proclaimed Severus, emperor: and Didius was accordingly put to death, by order of the senate: the promotion of Severus was disputed by two competitors for the empire: after a long civil war, he entered the capital in triumph.

Severus, in the commencement of his reign, was favourable to the Christians: (1) they had taken no share in the divisions which convulsed the empire: and he himself often became their advocate with the mutinous people.

Victor, who had succeeded St. Elutherius, was, at this period, sitting in the chair of Peter. His pontificate, which commenced in the year

(1) Tertull. ad Scap. cap. 4.

194, was distinguished by many illustrious and holy men : Serapion bishop of Antioch, acquired the highest celebrity by his writings ; especially by a treatise against a gospel falsely attributed to St. Peter, by the Docitæ. (1) These heretics taught that Christ's body was fantastic : and that the mystery of the incarnation had taken place only in appearance. Their gospel contained nothing that was not conformable to the morality of the Redeemer : but what principally excited the zeal of Serapion to condemn it, was its not having been transmitted by a legitimate tradition, or by the general and constant approbation of the Christian churches.

To St. Pantænus, a native of Sicily, was confided the government of the famous academy of Christian learning, established in the time of St. Mark, in the church of Alexandria. His zeal was equal to his erudition : and by following the example of the apostles, and propagating the gospel through Asia, he acquired the title of "Evangelist."—It is said, that in India, St. Pantænus found the gospel of St. Matthew in

(1) Euseb. in chron.

Hebrew, which the apostle St. Bartholomew carried to that country. (1) He revived faith of the Christians, and converted many fidels. His school was conducted, in his sence, by St. Clement; a man distinguis among the numerous illustrious scholars wh he had formed. (2) Some of Clement's wo are still extant: in which, though otherwise in the highest estimation, it is to be regre that he made too much use of the philosoph his times; to the study of which, he had in youth (3) been devoted. The same erronc taste he kept up in the Alexandrian school, which it had been introduced before him; which caused too many of the most estim and enlightened members, to deviate from simplicity of the Christian faith. Among many other great men who edified the ch at this period, was St. Narcissus, bishop of rusalem. Some vicious men whom this zea father attempted to reclaim from their disor conspired together, and accused him of a sha ful sin. Three of these impostors confir

(1) Euseb. 5. hist. 10. (2) Idem. 6. hist. 3. (3) Vid. ad ann. 196. i. et. ii.

their calumny by oaths, and terrible imprecations against themselves. The first wished that fire might consume him; the second devoted himself to a distemper of the most shocking nature; and the third to the loss of his sight, if they did not speak the truth. Narcissus, exhausted under the burden of his episcopal duties, had sighed, during many years, after the sweets of solitude: and profited by this opportunity to conceal himself from his flock. He passed, a long time, in unknown retreats, and left to Providence the vindication of his character. He was soon revenged, in a manner which he himself was far from wishing. The three perjured accusers experienced the evils which they had invoked upon themselves. The first was consumed with his whole family in his own house. The second, covered from head to foot with ulcers, was devoured by vermin. The third, terrified by the fate of the two others, repented, wept for his crime, and lost his sight. (1)

These exemplary punishments served not so much to prove the innocence of Narcissus, of

(1) This fact is recorded by the gravest authors: even Baronius relates it, and gives for his authority Eusebius 6. hist. 8. 9.

which no doubt was entertained, as to augment the grief of his flock for his absence ; nor could they be prevailed upon, till after the most urgent solicitations of the neighbouring bishops, to submit to the administration of any other prelate. Towards the end of his life, Narcissus reappeared in Jerusalem : the public affection was as ardent as ever : and notwithstanding his great age and infirmities, he was compelled to resume his former see. He consented, on condition that Alexander, a pious bishop of Cappadocia, should be appointed to share with him the duties of his diocess. His condition was immediately complied with : and this is the first instance, in record, of a *coadjutor* bishop, as well as of the translation of a prelate from one see to another. St. Narcissus presided with Theophilus, bishop of Cæsarea, at the council held in that city, on the subject of the paschal celebration.

This famous question had already been agitated under the pontificate of Anicetus ; and had assumed so serious an aspect as to draw St. Polycarp from Antioch to Rome. The Roman church and many others, from time immemorial,

had celebrated the feast of Easter on the first Sunday after the fourteenth day of the new moon, in the month of March. The churches of Asia Minor, on the contrary, on the fourteenth day of the same moon, on what ever day it should happen to fall. S. Anicetus observed the former, S. Polycarp the latter, usage : and though they could not bring themselves to agree on this subject, their union in every other respect, was preserved. (1) And it must be remembered, that the question as yet, was a free one ; as the dispute was carried on by Catholics alone. But under the pontificate of St. Victor, this difference of discipline began to assume the features of schism and heresy. The Montanists began to teach that the paschal festival could not be celebrated on any other than the fourteenth day of the moon, because their paraclete had so commanded it. Blastus, a Roman priest, had formed a schism in favor of the Montanists, and seduced a great number of persons. The pope, persuaded that there was no longer any room for indulgence, resolved to have recourse to rigor-

(1) Ex. ap. Euseb. 5. hist. 23.

ous measures ; and assembled a council at Rome ; and another at Cæsarea ; as we are informed (1) by veneral Bede, or rather by a fragment of that council cited in his works. Theophilus, bishop of that place, and the holy bishop of Jerusalem presided. The authority of those councils regulated the discipline, in Pontus, in Achaia, and in Gaul.

The bishops of Asia, (2) with Polycrates of Ephesus at their head, refused to submit to the decree of the council. Polycrates, in a letter addressed to St. Victor, evinced a determination not to yield. He defended the tradition of his church, which he traced up to St. Polycarp, and even to St. John the evangelist. He then continues : “ I who have spent sixty-five years, in the service of the Lord ; who have been united in communion with the brethren, spread through the whole world, and who have profoundly studied the holy scriptures, am not to be dismayed by menaces : For they who were greater than we are, have said, “ we must obey God rather than men.” Were I to add a catalogue

(1) Conc. Pal. circ an. 195. (2) Eus. hist. c. 23 et 29.

of the bishops, which, in pursuance to your request I convened, you would be astonished at their numbers ; and all have given their approbation to the letter addressed to you. For although they are aware of my being otherwise so contemptible, they also know that I carry not these grey hairs in vain. And that I have lived according to the model of Jesus Christ.” (1)

This pompous declaration could not fail to be ill received by the pope, who answered it with the severity he thought it deserved : for it looked like something more than mere attachment to an ancient custom. He refused thenceforth, to communicate with the disobedient Asiatics : and was about to cut them off from the communion of the church, when reclamations were sent to him by several bishops, who, though their opinions coincided with his, disapproved of his punishing with such extreme severity, an attachment to a usage, rendered venerable by time.

The holy and learned bishop of Lyons, St. Irenæus, wrote with most warmth, on this occasion : that he was actuated by no other mo-

(1) Ex. ap. Euseb. 5. hist. 28.

tive than that of peace and union, cannot be doubted. (1) In his letter he observes that his colleagues themselves could not approve of his excommunicating whole churches, for a custom, which they had received from their predecessors in the faith: that the pontiffs Anicetus, Pius I., Telesphorus, and Sixtus, of blessed memory, had not on that account, broken the bond of union with the Asiatic bishops: that disputes would never end, if he pretended to reduce private usages to uniformity: that the pontiff himself had sanctioned certain practices with regard to fasting in the Gallic, which were not followed in the Roman church. It appears, that pope Victor felt and submitted to the cogency of these reasons; he was martyred soon after, in the year 203: Zephyrinus succeeded him; and each church retained for a time its ancient customs.

During the civil wars, and for some time after them, Severus allowed the free exercise of their religion to the Christians: but when he saw himself in quiet possession of his throne, he

(1) Ibid. cap. 25.

forgot their former services, and published the most sanguinary edicts: (1) forbidding them to hold their religious meetings or to profess the name of Christ: For so sudden a change no cause can be assigned: unless we suppose that he was alarmed for the safety of the state, by the rapid decline of idolatry; for nearly half the empire was already converted to Christianity. The pagan philosophers and priests, who had no idea of the supernatural effects of grace, believed and persuaded the emperor, that the Christians had an infallible charm, by which they lured over whomsoever they pleased to their religion. Whatever might have been the cause, it is certain, that a most violent persecution broke out in the tenth year of his reign; and raged with so much fury, that the faithful began fear that the time of Antichrist had arrived. (2) It commenced in Egypt, and soon extended itself to the other provinces. The celebrated school of Alexandria furnished many distinguished martyrs: among whom were some from Egypt, Thebais, and the remotest parts of Africa. Clement, the

(1) Tert. apol. cap. 35. et ad Scap. cap. 2.

(2) Spondan. ad ann. 204. 1.

the head of that school, following the injunction of the gospel, had fled from the fury of the persecution to Cappadocia: where he devoted his time and zeal in instructing the ignorant, and relieving the wants of the church, whose bishop was imprisoned for the faith.

Leonides, Origen's father, was arrested at Alexandria, and crowned with martyrdom. (2)

This holy man had discharged, with fidelity, all the duties of his station in life: and particularly that of attending to the education of his son. He appeared to have a presentiment of the wonders to be effected by that "child of benediction;" and often kissed, with religious respect, his bosom, destined to be the temple of the Holy Ghost.

The youthful Origen would have surrendered himself to the persecutors before the sacrifice of his father, had he not been prevented by his friend: but not being able to visit his father in prison, he wrote him a letter, which breathes the most refined sentiments of religion; conjuring him to think only of the crown that awaited him in heaven. (1) Care not for us, said the

(1) Euseb. hist. 6. 1. ect. (2) Euseb iv. 1 and 2.

generous youth (meaning his brothers,) God will take care of us: we are too happy in having a martyr for our father. Leonides was beheaded; his property confiscated; and his family reduced to extreme indigence. Origen found a temporary asylum in the house of a rich lady. But to free himself from a precarious dependancy upon others, he opened a grammar school: (2) his talents and learning soon shone forth with great lustre; and, in a short time, he was promoted to the catechetical school of Alexandria. His disinterestedness, his genius, and the charms of his conversation, attracted round him a crowd of admirers, pagan as well as Christian: of whom many became illustrious saints: and some shed their blood for the faith, in the persecution, then raging.

A young and beautiful female slave, by name Potamiaena, was one of the most illustrious martyrs of Alexandria. Her master, not succeeding either by threats or promises to seduce her virtue, accused her of being a Christian. The pagan magistrate blushed not to persuade the vir-

(2) Idem. 6 hist. 3.

trous female, to yield to her master's desires : Potamiana disdained his persuasions : he threatened to plunge her alive into a caldron of pitch : plunge me, she replied, into the caldron, and see if the God whom I adore will not triumph over all the inventions of your cruelty. She was taken, at her word ; and immersed so gradually in the boiling pitch, that her torments lasted three hours Her mother Marcella, was also burned to death. (1)

The soldier Basilides one of Potamiana's guards, treated the holy virgin with respect, and defended her from the insults of the populace. She promised to intercede for him with the King of heaven. Scarcely had she expired, when Basilides confessed the name of Jesus Christ, and, after a few days of imprisonment, during which he was favoured with a vision of his holy advocate, he received baptism and was beheaded. Many others were converted in the same manner ; and by a similar death obtained the palm of martyrdom.

The persecution was no less violent, in the

(1) Ap. Sur. 14 Dec.

other parts of Africa. It had commenced two years previously to the edict, by the cruel disposition of Vitellius Saturninus, the proconsul; the first that drew the sword in that province.

(1) The first victims of his cruelty were apprehended and sent, to the number of twelve, of both sexes, to Carthage, where they were put to death. Their acts are extant and well authenticated: they inform us that when summoned before the tribunal of Saturninus, they severally confessed the religion of the Son of God: and having generously despised the promises and threats of the pagan magistrate, they were led to the place of execution; and after returning thanks to Jesus Christ, they were decapitated. Their names, as extracted from the pagan register, and preserved by the pious authors of the acts of their martyrdom, were as follows: Speratus, Narzal, Cittinus, Veturius, Felix, Acillynus, Lætantius, Januaria, Generosa, Vestina, Donatus, and Secundus. Tertullian celebrates their praises with enthusiasm; they have been par-

(1) Vid. Spondan. 20th. i.

ticularly venerated in Africa ; and honoured by the whole Christian church.

Six others, four young men, by name Revocatus, Saturninus, Satur, and Secundulus, and two females in the flower of their youth, whose names were Perpetua and Felicitas, were denounced as Christians in the same city. Of the women, the former was of noble birth ; and had an infant at her breast : the latter was at the time she was arrested, far advanced in pregnancy. The inhuman tyrant equally insensible to the respect due to their sex, and the delicacy of their situation, condemned them to be exposed to wild beasts, in the amphitheatre, for the amusement of the populace. They were kept in close confinement, until the day appointed for their execution. In the meantime, they earnestly joined in prayer, that Felicitas might be brought to bed, before the day of combat. As the law forbade women in her condition, to be put to death. (1) Their prayers were heard ;

(1) This law was not peculiar to Rome : it was common to the Egyptians : and from them was transmitted to the Greeks, as Plutarch testifies. *De serv. num. vind.*

(1) she was safely delivered of a daughter, whom she placed in the hands of a Christian nurse.

Perpetua had more than one conflict to undergo ; she had the tender feelings of a mother to sacrifice : she had to contend with alternate grief and anger : the prayers and reproaches of a pagan father : she had continually before her mind the terror of being mangled and devoured by ferocious beasts ; but from the midst of earthly tribulations, she looked up to heaven and was comforted. God, who from that moment became the sole object of her hope and her love, held forth the crown to his servant, and strengthened her by his special graces. The day was now at hand ; the jailer summoned the martyrs to appear : they joyfully advanced to the tribunal, as to a place of triumph, to hear the final sentence. At that moment, the father of Perpetua, piercing through the crowd, with her infant in his arms, fell round his daughter's neck exclaiming : " My daughter, have pity on this hoary head : have pity on your father, if you

(2) Of this Bede and Ado make mention. Vide. Spond. p. 75. v.

have ever found him worthy of that name. If I have reared you with so much care and tenderness, and loved you more than all my other children, do not expose me to public shame ! Or if you have no regard for *me*, think at least of your afflicted relations : your mother ; your aunt ; your little babe, already languishing for want of a mother's care. " As he spoke these last words, says Perpetua, who herself relates the affecting tale, he caught hold of both my hands, kissed them, and bathed them, with his tears. He then threw himself at my feet, and piercing my heart with the most tender cries. I felt the more compassion for him, as he was the only one of our family that continued so strangely blind to the truth. Without suffering my resolution to be shaken by his tears, I gave him the most expressive marks of affection, and ended by telling him that our lives were not at our disposal ; and that God, to whom every thing was subject, would accomplish his holy will. Her father then retired inconsolable. " The judge," continues Perpetua, advised me to reverence the grey hairs of my father, and to pity the tender age, and the innocence of my

son. "Be not insensible," he said, "to the cries of your unhappy infant, and to the tears of your afflicted father. What will it cost you to throw a few grains of incense on the fire, in honor of the gods, and for the safety of our emperor?" "Never," I replied; "no human inducement shall ever separate me from the Lord, and the society of the saints." "You are a Christian, then," he rejoined. "Yes," I again replied, "I am." My companions made the same confession: and we were all condemned to be devoured by wild beasts: St. Perpetua then relates two visions, which animated her to consummate her sacrifice with courage. (1) The martyr Satur, likewise mentions in his own acts, the history of a vision with which he himself was favored.

The day of combat at length arrived: and the martyrs, with the exception of Secundulus, who had died in prison, went joyfully from their dungeon to the amphitheatre. When they reached the gate, the sentinels offered them superstitious dresses: to the men a red mantle

(1) Tertull de anima S. S. S. Aug. de anim 18. et lib. 3. c. 9. Id. de temp. barb. c. 10. c.

usually worn by the priests of Saturn: to the women, a white fillet sacred to Ceres, to be tied round their heads: they scornfully rejected these trappings of idolatry; and the tribune permitted them to pass on in their common dress. Different kinds of wild animals were let loose upon the men. Perpetua and Felicitas were at first stripped of all their clothes, but the people cried out to have them covered. They were then shut up in a net and thrown to be lacerated by a wild cow. From this animal, they received no mortal injury; but they sunk under the repeated wounds inflicted by the inexperienced gladiators. The pains which she suffered on this occasion caused some agitation in the delicate Perpetua, but she soon resumed her wonted tranquillity, and showing the executioner where to strike, she received the final blow and crowned her heroic sufferings by a glorious death.

In Gaul the persecution raged with peculiar fury. Severus, perceiving that the number of Christians had increased, in such a manner, at Lyons, as to threaten the destruction of idolatry in that city, ordered some of his troops to sur-

round the town, while the rest broke into the houses, and massacred, indiscriminately, all that professed the Christian faith. The streets were deluged with blood : for according to an inscription on an ancient monument still extant, nineteen hundred, exclusive of women and children, perished on this occasion. The venerable bishop, Irenæus, (1) was brought before the tyrant, who condemned him to death, and boasted that he had, at once, despatched the shepherd and the flock. (2) A holy priest named Zacharias, who escaped the general carnage, administered the rights of sepulture to the body of the martyr, and succeeded him in the episcopal see of Lyons.

In the capital of the empire, the Christians suffered much, from the avarice and impiety of Plautian. This man, by birth a plebian, but immensely rich, (3) had married his daughter to the son of Severus. The emperor, having marched into the East on an expedition against the Parthians, appointed Plautian administrator

(1) Euseb. 5. 20.

(2) Martyr. Rom. 21 Jul. (3) Dio in Sever.

of affairs, during his absence. Raised to such an elevation, he soon forgot the meanness of his birth : and resolved to improve the auspicious opportunity of aggrandizing his fortune by rapine, violence, and confiscation ; on the ground that the Christians rendered not due honor to the emperor. He condemned as many as were unable, or unwilling to redeem their lives by money, to suffer a cruel death. The ancient calumnies, so often, and so forcibly refuted, were now revived : and to bear the name of Christian was made a capital crime. Of the faithful, some were fastened to crosses : others were thrown as food to wild beasts. To be condemned to servitude or to the mines, was considered as an act of clemency. Rome streamed with blood ; the ordinary executioners were unable to despatch the accumulated victims : old age received no indulgence, and the modest virgin was condemned to public prostitution.

When the cause of Christianity was thus attacked by calumny and persecution, the Almighty in his mercy, raised up a powerful advocate in the person of Tertullian, a priest of Carthage.

(1) He was born a pagan : and before his conversion to Christianity, as he himself informs us, indulged in the vices and disorders to which the African youths were addicted. He was deeply skilled in Grecian literature, and jurisprudence : and it is also observable in his writings, how carefully he had studied the works of St. Justin, and St. Irenæus. The most celebrated of his writings is his Apologetic. He begins it, by complaining that the Christians were condemned to the severest torments, without being permitted to speak in their own defence ; a privilege granted to the most criminal malefactors. To vindicate them for not adoring the gods of the empire, he exposes the base origin of the pagan deities ; the absurdity of their worship ; the indecency of their ceremonies ; and, in a flow of brilliant eloquence, expatiates on the holy and sublime prerogatives of the Christian dispensation.

The object of the Christian worship, says the learned apologist, is one only God, whose power, by a single word, created the universe out

(1) Ther. de scrip. eccles. in Tertull.

of nothing : whose wisdom has arranged it in its beautiful order, and whose providence preserves, and governs it, through all its parts. The earth, the sea, the planets, and the firmament announce the glory, the wisdom and the power of this Supreme Creator. He is the God, who, giving the most authentic testimony of himself by word and work, has inspired the ancient prophets to foretel the mysteries of future times. The authenticity of their writings is unquestionable : and therefore acknowledged even by the Jews, our enemies. The antiquity of these writings cannot be disputed : for Moses, the first of the inspired penmen, lived long before there was any mention of Greek or Roman authors. The veracity of their writings is incontestable : for, the predictions, verified by events which no human mind could have foreseen, attest the divinity of the inspiration. One of these remarkable events, is the catastrophe which we have seen befall the Jewish nation, once the cherished people of the most high God. Their city is in ruins, and themselves, stripped of their national existence by the Romans, are driven, like herds of slaves from their native

soil : they are immersed in deep, and lasting misery ; they wander through the world without laws, without protection, without an altar, and without sacrifice. The same divine oracles that foretold the dispersion of the Jews, indicate, at the same time, a more faithful race of 'believers, whom God had decreed to gather from all nations, and to give the inheritance of those blessings, which the Jewish nation had ungratefully rejected. These believers are the converted gentiles : who, obedient to the voice of the living God, forsake their idols, and profess the faith of Jesus Christ, the founder of the Christian religion. The mention of Jesus Christ gives the eloquent apologist an opportunity of informing the heathen reader of the nature of the Messiah : he speaks of his eternal existence, and his having assumed human flesh, in the womb of a virgin, as the prophet Isaiah had announced seven hundred years before the event took place. Jerusalem, says he, and all Judea witnessed the humanity of the Son of God ; his divinity is invincibly proved by his miracles, and his resurrection from the tomb. The account of all the circumstances of his death, addressed by Pontius

Pilate to Tiberius, have been deposited in the Roman archives : and Tiberius would have professed his belief in the divinity, and religion of Jesus Christ, if that profession could have been reconciled with his temporal interest. Having established the divine origin of Christianity, Tertullian refutes the slanders propagated by the idolaters against the Christian brethren. He alleges the respectability of their numbers in the city, in the towns, in the army, in the navy, and in the very senate of Rome. He solemnly appeals to the public : and defies them to prove a single criminal charge against the fidelity of the Christians to their lawful sovereign ; their peaceful demeanor in society, and the morality of their conduct in private life. He then shews the injustice of persecuting such men, merely on the ground of their religion.

Such is an imperfect analysis of that long and beautiful apology ; superior to any thing that had appeared, on the same subject, during the two first centuries of the church. The violence of the tyrant relented soon after ; whether or not in consequence of the apology, it is impossible to determine : happy for the author had he

persevered in the same principles, which he so strongly and eloquently enforced. (1) But with his talents and his virtues, Tertullian did not possess humility : his severe and morose disposition led him into a system of rigour, repugnant to the gospel : (2) and betrayed him into the errors of the Montanists : (3) he maintained, with those heretics, that second marriages were unlawful : and that sinners, who had fallen into certain grievous faults should be denied the grace and privilege of penance. These errors had been condemned by St. Zephyrinus : and the justness of the condemnation was universally admitted by the Christian bishops, in communion with the holy see. Tertullian, unacquainted with the first virtue of the gospel, felt himself involved in the censure : roused to indignation by the charitable tenderness which they evinced in his behalf, he grew violent and refractory : and, in dark resentment, embraced the heresy, which maintained the contrary opinion. He is thought to have died in his errors ; a melancholy instance of the fatal effects of pride.

(1) Ap. Amb. in 1. Cor. 13. (2) Hier. de script. eccles. in Tertull. (3) See Baron. ad ann. 201. iv.

The hand of God fell heavily on the persecutors of his church: Plautian, convicted of having aspired to the empire, and treacherously designed the murder of the emperor, was stabbed by Caracalla, son of the emperor Severus. (1). The emperor himself, having undertaken an expedition into Britain accompanied by his sons Caracalla and Geta, soon forced the Caledonians to sue for peace. Severus advanced, on horseback, between the two armies, and was preparing to ratify the conditions, when Caracalla, who was riding by his side, checking in his horse, drew and raised his sword to strike the emperor, his father. A cry of alarm was instantly raised. The disconcerted parricide was unable to perpetrate his crime. In mournful silence, he returned his sword to the scabbard, while a look of embarrassment and confusion gave evidence of his guilt. The heart-broken Severus, dissembled his anguish, and preserved an appearance of tranquillity until evening. Having retired to bed, he called to his chamber his son, with the prætorian prefect, and presenting him a sword,

(1) Herod. lib. 3.

“my son,” he said, “if you are weary of a father’s life, either pierce me yourself with this sword, or command the prefect to give the fatal stroke. He perhaps will spare you the horror of the deed.” Caracalla did neither: but the emperor after lingering a few days, died of grief (1) at York.

Caracalla and Geta being acknowledged emperors, by the army, manifested a mutual hatred for each other, even before they had arrived in Italy. On their return, Caracalla, affecting a wish to be reconciled to his brother, requested queen Julia to invite them both to her apartment. As soon as Geta entered, Caracalla, accompanied by a band of ruffians, rushed in, and slew him, in his mother’s arms. Julia herself was wounded, and sprinkled with the blood of her murdered son. Such was the emperor, to whose mercy the Roman empire, and the defenceless Christians who already filled the provinces, were committed. But the blood of the martyrs was the seed of Christianity: and the church, supported by her divine spouse, came forth more bright and triumphant, from every persecution.

(1) Herod. lib 4.

CHAPTER IV.

EMPERORS.

MACRINUS.

HELIOGABALUS.

ALEXANDER.

MAXIMINUS.

MAXIMUS AND BALBINUS, ST. ANTERUS.

GORDIAN.

PHILIP.

DECIUS.

POPEs.

ST. ZEPHYRINUS, CONTINUED.

ST. CALLIXTUS.

ST. URBAN.

ST. PONTIAN.

ST. FABIAN.

*From the fifth persecution, anno 211, to the
Novatian schism. Anno 251.*

UNDER the pontificate of Zephyrinus, flourished Minutius Felix a Roman counsellor. (1) That celebrated man was warmly attached to a certain Octavius, who, like himself had been converted from the errors of paganism. Before their conversion, they had been inseparable friends: during their childhood they had been bosom confidants. After a long absence from

(1) Hier. de script. Eccles. in Minut.

each other, Octavius returned to Rome, when Felix had least expectation of meeting him. This happened at that season, when gentlemen engaged in the pursuits of the bar, were accustomed to leave the city to unbend their minds, and repose from their forensic labours. Felix quitted Rome with Octavius, and another of his friends called Cæcilius, who still adhered to paganism: they retired to Ostia. One day as they were musing together on the sea shore, Cæcilius perceived an idol of Serapis, and immediately, in testimony of his adoration, applied his hand to his mouth. "Is it possible," exclaimed Octavius, addressing himself to Minutius, "that so wise a man and enlightened a scholar can remain benighted in error." He said no more: and they continued their walk.

Cæcilius, from that moment, fell into a profound reverie, and appeared extremely dejected. Felix enquired the cause: he acknowledged that he had been struck by the language of Octavius. It was then proposed to investigate the important question of religion: which being assented to, they sat down upon the banks of the sea, with Felix in the middle, as umpire. Cæcilius spoke

first; inveighed, with the wonted prejudices of the times, against Christianity: Octavius never once interrupted the chain of his invective: but after he had concluded, refuted every imputation with equal mildness and force, and dilated with peculiar emphasis, on the maxims which the gospel inculcates. He supported his assertions with solid proofs; to authority, he added the more convincing argument of example: and turned upon the pagan those very weapons, which he had attempted to wield against the truth. Minutius, whose duty it was to pronounce on the merits of the controversy, applauded the reasoning of Octavius. Cæcilius was defeated: and feeling the grace of God, "We have both triumphed, he suddenly cried: Octavius over me, and I over the spirit of error. I am a Christian! This generous candour was crowned with perseverance. Cæcilius became a zealous Christian, and was of signal service to the faith which he embraced. To his exertions the church is indebted for the conversion of St. Cyprian. (1)

(1) Vehemens me conjectura adducit, says Baronius, ut existimen Cæcilium illum insignem eruditione virum Cypriani Carthageniensis magistrum a quo honoris causa Cæcilii nomen accepit.

Caius, a priest of the Roman church, at the same time, had a public conference with Proclus, a celebrated advocate of Montanism : the fame of whose learning and wisdom contributed, in a great degree, to dazzle and seduce the unfortunate Tertullian. Caius brought forward irrefutable testimonies against the errors of that sect: pope Zephyrinus did not any longer hesitate to excommunicate them. A short time after, this pontiff died, having sat seventeen years : and was succeeded by Calixtus, who occupied the chair five years.

Under his pontificate, flourished Julius Africanus, one of the most learned Christians of that age : (1) he was, if we credit Suidas, a native of Nicopolis, in Palestine. He composed a chronological work, of which the object was to prove the antiquity of the true religion. He was the first chronologist that ever flourished in the Christian church. His celebrated work has not come down to us ; at least, under the name of its illustrious author. Julius likewise addressed a letter to Aristides, with the view to reconcile the ap-

(1) Euseb. in chron.

parent contradictions of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, by St. Matthew and St. Luke. The writings of this great man were highly valued and esteemed by the ancient doctors: St. Jerome, in particular, panegyricizes them, as replenished with erudition; adorned with philosophy; and enlightened with the science of the sacred scriptures.

Caracalla, by a violent death, lost the empire and his life, on the eighth of April, A. D. 219. Macrinus, one of the prætorian prefects, dreading the caprice and cruelty of so lawless a master, resolved to cut him off. He gained over a centurion to assassinate him. After two days of trouble and ferment, the author of this crime succeeded in being proclaimed emperor. (1) But he abandoned himself to pleasure and drunkenness, and their inseparable attendant, inactivity. Instead of proceeding to Rome, he remained at Antioch, buried in Asiatic voluptuousness, which made him contemptible in the eyes of the soldiery: and by an ill-timed severity, which he did not know how to enforce, he rendered him-

(1) Lamprid. in Diadum. Capitol. in Macrin.

self universally detested. Mæsa, a spirited and enterprising woman, sister to the late empress, deemed this the proper moment to vindicate the death of her nephew Caracalla. Macrinus, dreading her power, banished her to Emesa, the place of her birth, whither she conducted one of her grandsons, a prince then but fourteen years of age : but of a stature far superior to his years, and a person, which none could behold, without feeling a sympathy for his fate. The inhabitants of Emesa immediately created him pontiff of their temple, dedicated to the sun, under the name of Elagabalus, from which circumstance, the young prince derived the name of Heliogabalus. They invested him, not without some design, with a purple garment, embroidered with gold, and with a crown sparkling with precious stones. His pontifical dignity threw a colouring over their intentions. So great was the elegance with which he discharged his functions, and the luxury with which he accompanied the bacchanal dances, that he excited the admiration of the people, and won the applause of the soldiers. The latter abandoned the camp, which was situated near the city of Emesa, to wit-

ness the magnificence of Heliogabalus : the opportunity of inspiring them with the idea of raising him to the throne, seemed favourable to his ambitious grandmother : all were disgusted with Macrinus : and ready to sacrifice him to their caprice : being seconded by the principal officers, Mæsa left the city about sunset, and retired with all her family, to the camp. Heliogabalus was robed in the garment which Caracalla had often worn. By the troops he was received with shouts of acclamation, and declared emperor on the spot. Mæsa bestowed vast donatives from the treasures, amassed in the preceding reigns ; the garrisons of the neighbouring cities ran to participate in the distribution : and the forces of Emesa became very strong, and able to contend, if necessary, for their new master. But far from making any opposition, the rest of the army deserted the cause of Macrinus ; who was put to death, after a reign of fourteen months. It was soon perceived that the new emperor was more fit to act as the high priest of a voluptuous religion, than to wield the Roman sceptre. By his vices and superstition, he soon rendered himself more despicable than his predecessor :

he removed from Emesa to Rome the flint which he pretended had fallen from heaven: to this absurd deity he made the gods of the empire subservient: and erected to his honour a magnificent temple on the Palatine mount.

Cruelty, the predominant passion of his nature, soon began to make its appearance. Mæsa discovered it, and trembled: to avoid the consequences which she anticipated, she persuaded him to adopt Alexian, son of her daughter Mamæa. She succeeded: changed the name of Alexian into Alexander, and caused him to be created Cæsar. But the emperor soon repented this measure. Alexander was adorned with dispositions which could not but excite the jealousy of an undeserving rival. Heliogabalus had recourse to various artifices to rid himself of Alexander, and at length ordered him to be assassinated a year after he had been created Cæsar. But the command was not executed: the emperor himself fell a victim to the resentment of the soldiery: they slew him after a reign of three years and nine months, and cast his body into the Tyber. On the same day, Alexander received the ho-

mage of the senate, soldiers and people. (1) He was then but fourteen years old. Mamæa, the emperor's mother, was a friend to the Christians. The young emperor himself was singularly struck with the evangelical maxim which forbids us to treat another otherwise, than we would wish to be treated. (2) He ordered it to be engraven in frequented places, and in his palace: and when he felt himself obliged to inflict punishment, he caused the sentence to be announced by the public crier. He was scrupulously exact in choosing governors of provinces, and other important officers. Born with virtuous inclinations, he felt a natural propensity to venerate the power of the Deity: but had not the discernment to distinguish the true science of religion from the vain observations of astrologers and augurs. He had a private temple, filled with the statues of virtuous emperors, and personages renowned for their piety: but he confounded together Abraham and Orpheus, Jesus Christ and Apollonius Tyanæus. Mamæa's idea of religion was (3) more enlightened: it has been

(1) Lamprid. in Alex. (2) Idem. *ibid*.

(3) Eus. iv. 21.

affirmed, that on hearing from Origen of the miracles of Jesus Christ and the maxims of the gospel, she became a Christian : it is certain, that she dispatched from Antioch, the seat of the court, a body of soldiers to Alexandria, to conduct Origen to her palace : and it is moreover certain, that the Roman court was never so favourably inclined towards the Christian religion as under the present reign. Origen, at this period, stood on the pinnacle of fame. He was distinguished by every science, and adorned with every virtue. The number of prelates whom he had formed, and whom the discretion of the church had elevated to the highest distinctions, appeared already incalculable. Of his disciples many had suffered martyrdom in the persecution of Severus. He experienced no greater consolation, than when he saw arrested for their religion, those whom he had formed to knowledge and virtue. He visited them in their chains ; assisted at their trials ; accompanied them to the places of execution ; encouraged them by his presence, and when necessary, by the most animated persuasion. In consequence of his zeal, he was obliged to fly from the city of Alexandria ;

wandered from province to province ; was several times apprehended, and even put to the torture.

His ideas of chastity he carried to such an extreme, that not content with preserving it from any thing that might sully its purity, he resolved to ensure himself against the dangers of concupiscence : he interpreted to the letter that passage of the holy scriptures which speaks of those who make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven ; and, with his own hands put the mystic counsel into execution. (1) The fact reached the ears of Demetrius his bishop, who rebuked him for his imprudence, but hoped that the rectitude of his intentions would atone for the indiscretion of the deed. In the forty-fifth year of his age he was ordained priest in Palestine, by Theodistus of Cæsarea, and Alexander of Jerusalem.

He conferred on the schools a celebrity, which before his days, they never had attained. Blessed with universal talents, and skilled in every department of science, he taught the belles-

(1) Euseb. 6. hist. 7.

revives with the body. About the same time, also, and in the same country, appeared the Valesian heretics; the followers of Valesius, an Arabian philosopher. (1) They considered the liberty of man, incompatible with concupiscence.

Notwithstanding the imprudence of his youthful fervour, Origen declared against these erroneous maxims, and opposed them with great success. But it was not only his profound learning that achieved such glorious conquests; his mildness, modesty, and disinterestedness were so fascinating, that it seemed next to impossible, not to yield to him, either in public or in private. He attained to a very advanced age, notwithstanding the frequent persecutions raised against him, and the formal edict of Decius, by which all who taught in the church, were made guilty of death. Among other works, he composed an infinite number of learned letters, and more than a thousand sermons; not through the vain motive of displaying his talents, but at the solicitation of his friends, and particularly of one by name Ambrose, who incessantly reminded

(1) Epiph. hæc. 58. Aug. de hæc. c. 37.

him of the account which he one day should have to render to the Creator, of the talents which had been intrusted to him. It was not, however, till he had reached his seventieth year, that he consented to have his homilies or his discourses transcribed. Moved by the wants of the church, and afflicted at seeing the faith exposed by spurious translations of the scripture, he published an edition, in six columns, from which it took the name of Hexapla. (1) The first column contained the Hebrew text, in Hebrew characters, and the same text in Greek characters, for the benefit of those who could understand the Hebrew language without being able to read it, with facility. For, the Greeks, extremely attached to their own language, seldom applied to any other: and Origen has been highly applauded for having, at least in his more advanced years, studied the Hebrew language, in order to explain the scriptures with more precision and facility. It is, however, said, that his knowledge, in this tongue, was not profound. The third column of the Hexapla contained the version of Aquila, who forsook the errors of pa-

(1) Ephiph. de mensur-

ganism, and became a Christian: but afterwards turning a Jew, he translated the Bible with the intention of supplanting the Septuagint, and weakening those passages which make mention of Jesus Christ. The fourth column contained the version of Symmachus, composed in the preceding century. Born a Samaritan, Symmachus embraced Christianity, and then associated himself to the sect of Ebion. The fifth column contained the translation of the Septuagint, made under Ptolomy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, more than two hundred and fifty years before the birth of Christ. The sixth contained the version of Theodotion who from a disciple of the heretic Tatian, turned Marcionite, and then embraced Judaism. Though the work of an apostate, it was not without some merit; and accorded much better with the Septuagint, than that of either Aquila or Symmachus. Origen considered the Septuagint the best of all translations: and only added the three others, the better to explain some obscure and mysterious passages. (1)

(1) This work was not only esteemed, but followed, by S. Jerome, in his latin translation of the Septuagint. Hier. *præf. in pentateuch.* Ep. 14. et 59. ad Aug. &c. &c.

This indefatigable doctor, published, also, a book entitled the *Octopla*: which, besides those versions we have already mentioned, contained two others, by unknown authors. One of which was found at Jericho; the other at Nicopolis, near Actium in Epirus; these, however, were only partial translations of the holy book. The *Octopla* is still extant.

He wrote, also, against almost all heretics; but especially the Marcionites and Valentinians. He answered the work of Celsus, a pagan philosopher, against the Christian religion: this answer has always gone under the title of the “*Apology for Christianity*;” the best that antiquity ever produced, whether in regard to profane and sacred learning; or elegance and chastity of diction; or arrangement and order of the subject; or strength and power of argumentation. Such was the opinion which Eusebius formed of this extraordinary production, that he directed all who wished to acquire a sound and perfect knowledge of religion, to peruse the *apology of Origen*.

But none of his works can stand in comparison with his commentaries on the scripture

The gospel of St. Matthew alone, comprised twenty-five volumes: and it is to be remarked, that he is the first writer that ever engaged in that difficult career. But of his commentaries or sermons, none in the original, and but few, translated into Latin by Ruffinus, have reached our days.

The works of Origen are not without their faults: but the one in which he has erred most, is his treatise "on principles." His design in this work was to establish the principles to which man must adhere in matters of religion: and thus to give the death-blow to the heresies of Valentinus, Marcion, and other sectarians. But, led astray by the specious maxim of Platonism, that the punishment inflicted by the Deity, was merely medicinal, he asserted that the damned would, one day, cease to be objects of the divine vengeance, and be admitted to a participation of the joys of heaven. This is the chief error of that extraordinary man: which, however, he advanced merely as an opinion; without supporting it as a certain truth. To the doctrines of the church, he always evinced an unqualified submission.

One of the most illustrious disciples of Origen was Gregory, surnamed Thaumaturgus, or the worker of prodigies. (1) He was born at Neocæsarea in Pontus, of a noble and wealthy family. At the age of fourteen he lost his father. His mother watched, with special care, over his education: and used every means to facilitate his exertions in the study of literature and eloquence. Blessed with superior talents, he made rapid progress: and promised not to disappoint the hopes of an anxious parent.

There was at Berytha in Phœnicia, a celebrated school of Roman jurisprudence, to which Gregory was sent; on his way thither he passed through Cæsarea, where he had an opportunity of hearing the lectures of Origen. His quick and penetrating mind knew well how to appreciate the merit of so great a master. He was pleased with Cæsarea: contracted an intimate friendship with the head of its school, and relinquished the idea of proceeding to Berytha. Origen, convinced of the excellent qualities of his new disciple, omitted nothing that could

(1) Greg. Nyss. in vit. Greg. Thaumaturg.

tend to form him. But his principal aim was to open his eyes to the follies of paganism, and the beauties of the Christian religion. He expressed a longing desire to procure for him true and substantial happiness: and after gradually preparing the way, endeavoured to inculcate in his disciple the principles of true philosophy. He taught him logic, or the art of reasoning solidly: natural sciences, or the study of the works of creation: geometry and astronomy which serve to elevate the ideas, and instruct the heart: and philosophy; which teaches the mind to reflect on itself, subdue its passions, and reduce to practice the real and unsophisticated virtues which it recommends. After this he turned his attention to the study of theology, and the scripture: expounded all that the ancient poets and philosophers, both Greek and foreigners, had written on divine things: but carefully kept from his view those who taught direct atheism, by denying the existence of a Divinity and a providence. This is the method which Gregory (1) informs us was followed by his master. He gives us a glowing picture of

(1) Greg. in Orig.

the goodness of Origen's heart; the purity of his style; and the perfection of his mind, in the discourse delivered immediately after his baptism. For, as soon as he became acquainted with the principles of Christianity, he did not hesitate to abandon the pagan system. Gregory's purity, even from his earliest infancy, was a subject of admiration: on this head, he enjoyed an unsullied character, even before his conversion to Christianity.

After the completion of his studies, he returned to Neocæsarea, where his family enjoyed great wealth, and occupied the highest stations. But the love of prayer and the study of the science of salvation, inspired him with a predilection for solitude: distributing all his wealth among the poor, he took the resolution of passing in holy obscurity the remainder of his life. His shining virtues could not, however, but attract the attention and admiration of the world: he was soon elevated to the episcopal dignity, notwithstanding all his exertions to escape from the honor, and the responsibility of such a promotion. (1)

(1) Vid. Baron. ad. ann. 233. viii.

The faith continued to make rapid progress under the propitious reign of Alexander. The ceremonies of the church became every day more magnificent, and its doctrine more respected. The faithful, however, did not neglect to stand prepared against the days of trial, which were soon to return. Pope Callixtus constructed, on the Appian way, a subterraneous cemetery which bears his name. There the faithful were buried: and there, in the ensuing persecution, they took refuge from the sword. (1) Even at this epoch, notwithstanding the benevolence of Alexander's disposition, the faithful did not enjoy entire security. The sovereign pontiff himself was apprehended; thrust into prison; bruised many days successively with cudgels; and precipitated from a window into a well. He sat little less than four years. (2) and was succeeded by St. Urban. Many other martyrs fell by the swords of intriguing politicians. These men, who were in high repute at this period, looked upon the Christian

(1) On the interesting subject of the catacombs or cemeteries, see Boronius ad. ann. 226. iii. iv.

(2) Martyr. Rom. et alia.

religion as a novelty, incompatible with the laws of Rome. Ulpian, one of the most celebrated of them, published a treatise on the duty of pro-consuls, in which he collected all the opinions of former princes respecting the Christians; and attempted to prove that they were subject to the severest penalties. Raised to the dignity of prefect, or governor of Rome, he treated with extreme rigour the faithful, whom he conceived to be nothing better than malefactors. (1) He himself, however, fell a victim to the fury of the prætorian guards.

The church was soon entirely deprived of the hopes held out by the moderation, and natural benevolence of the emperor Alexander. His zeal for public order and strict discipline, notwithstanding the respect which it could not fail to command, imposed on the people a burden for which their degeneracy was unequal. He had recently obtained a signal victory over the mighty Artaxerxes; who had subjugated the Parthians, and re-established the Persian monarchy. He was now obliged to march to the extremity of the empire, against the Germans: who,

(1) Lactant. lib. 5. cap. 11. 12.

having passed the Rhine, and the Danube, inundated and carried devastation through the provinces. Alexander had already reached the vicinity of Moguncia : and the barbarians had fled beyond the Rhine, when a tumult breaking out among the legions, he was massacred in the year 237, the fourteenth of his reign. Māmæa, who accompanied him in this expedition, was likewise put to death.

This bold attempt seemed, at first, nothing more than a paroxysm of fury : but when it was discovered, that the chief conspirator was raised to the imperial throne, it assumed the appearance of a premeditated plot. This conspirator was Maximinus : a man, whose character bore all the rough traits of the barbarian ; none of the refinements of the Roman. He was born in Thrace (1) his father was a Goth ; his mother an Albanian : both his manners and his figure plainly spoke his origin. His stature was gigantic. He was originally a herdsman ; then a common soldier : but his military prowess soon raised him to the highest honours. When on the throne, his first study was to inspire his subjects with terror

(1) Capit. in Maxim.

he put to death four thousand men, without trial or distinction, of whom the greatest crime was, that they bewailed the death of the humane Alexander. The Christians had every reason to regret the fate of that benevolent prince; and therefore incurred the odium of the imperial assassin. This was the cause of the sixth persecution. To them every calamity and misfortune was attributed. The decree of Maximinus was particularly aimed against the bishops, whom he considered the supporters of Christianity. (1) The cities, the country, the fortifications and the camps, were crowded, according to Tertullian, with the followers of the Christian religion. They were at the bar; in the palace of the Cæsars; every where, except in the temples of the pagan gods: and had they been put to death or exiled, the empire must have been left a wilderness; a prey to the first bold invader. But what gave a greater latitude to the persecution, was the untoward zeal of a Christian soldier: which elicited the celebrated work of Tertullian, entitled the *Soldier's Crown*." Maximinus, on ascending the throne, distributed among the troops the

(1) F .b. 6. hist. 21.

usual donatives: it was customary for each soldier to present himself with a wreath of laurel on his head. Among the crowd appeared one, with his head uncovered, and carrying the wreath in his hand: being asked why he did not wear it, "it is" he replied, "because I am a Christian, and my religion forbids me to be crowned with your laurels." He was immediately stript of his uniform, deprived of his arms, and sent to prison. The great majority of the Christians censured his imprudence. But Tertullian contended, that the crown was a token of pagan superstition: and that in refusing to wear it, the soldier only complied with his strict duty. It was asked in what part of the sacred writing such practices were condemned. Tertullian attempted to prove that they were condemned by tradition. (1) Though at this time a Montanist, his notions are generally correct; and the authority of tradition is solidly established: but, in the direct point in question, his rigour is extreme, and his opinions erroneous. He published, at the same time, a treatise on persecution: in which he main-

(1) See the dissertation in Spondanus p. 172. v. *Laureum gestare licitum*.

tains, that no Christian in the time of danger, can save his life by flight, or redeem it by money.

St. Barba, whom the Greek church holds in great veneration, and who, it is said, was instructed by Origen, received the palm of martyrdom at Nicomedia, during this persecution. St. Pontian, pope, successor to St. Urban, was exiled to Sardinia, where he was put to death, after a pontificate of five years. (1) Of this persecution, which continued three years, we have few details, except that the churches erected in the preceding reign were burned, and every species of cruelty practised against the Christians. In the room of Potian, St. Anterus, a Greek, succeeded; who in all probability, died a martyr, one month after his election. (2)

He was, eight days after, succeeded by St. Fabian, whose election was esteemed miraculous. Fabian had just arrived from the country, when the clergy were assembled, to elect their chief pastor: he was confounded in the multitude; but a dove was seen to descend and re-

(1) Martyr. Rom. 19. nov.

(2) Euseb. in chron. et hist. 6. 22.

pose over his head. (1) This excited universal attention: all, with one voice, exclaimed, he is worthy of the episcopacy: and he was immediately raised to the pontifical chair. He sat fourteen years, without ever degenerating from his miraculous vocation.

The Roman empire was, at this period, in a critical situation; Maximinus was growing every day, more odious: the yoke was intolerable: Africa displayed the signal of revolt: Gordian was made proconsul, and his election was ratified at Rome, by the people and senate: he associated with himself his son, whose name was also Gordian: both were, three months after, defeated by the partisans of Maximinus. They fell in the battle; the father strangled himself in despair. The senate dreading the resentment of Maximinus, raised to the throne, Maximus and Balbinus. (2) But the people were not satisfied with a choice, in which they had no share: to appease them, it became necessary to dignify with the title of Cæsar, Gordian, grandson of the proconsul, then only eleven years old. Preparations for war

(1) Euseb. 6. hist. 22.

(2) Herod. lib. 7. i. capitol. in Maxim. et in Gordian.

were made, by both parties : Maximinus sat down before Aquilea, and made upon it many bold, but vain assaults. In consequence of his ill success, his fury was roused up to insanity : he threw himself into the midst of his own soldiers, pierced them at random : and sacrificed to his phrenzy a host of faithful warriors. Fired with indignation, a band of soldiers fell upon him in broad day, and massacred him in his tent. His head was despatched to Rome, where it was received with loud acclamations. A calm ensued : but it was of short duration. The soldiery could feel no attachment to emperors who were not of their own creation : Maximus and Balbinus had not reigned a year, before the army mutinied, and put them to death. The young Gordian, (1) was proclaimed emperor : he blessed the empire with a tranquil reign ; and the Christians with a season of repose. He was assassinated, and succeeded, by Philip.

The church still continued to make many important conquests. The bishops took advantage of the calm, to elect worthy co-operators in the

(1) Herod. lib. 7.

ministry. Phædimus, bishop of Amasea, a man distinguished by the gift of prophecy, succeeded in placing Gregory Thaumaturgus on the episcopal chair of Neocæsarea; a city which at that time, contained but seventeen Christians. Gregory submitted to the divine call, was consecrated with the accustomed ceremonies; but requested a longer time to instruct himself thoroughly in the mysteries of religion. It chanced, that having spent a whole night in meditation, he was favoured with a vision of the Blessed Virgin and St. John, who explained to him the mystery of the Trinity. (1)

After this vision, the holy bishop set out for the diocess which he was appointed to govern. The people flocked from the city to meet him: before night many embraced the truth: and on the succeeding day his door was besieged by multitudes of the poor and afflicted. He cured the sick, and by the influence of his miracles per-

(1) The instruction which he received on this occasion, he committed to writing: S. Gregory of Nyssa, makes mention of it. It has been cited in the fifth œcumenical council: as also by S. Basil the Great, and Leontius Scholasticus. Basil de Sp. S. c. 29. et ep. 64 ad. Neocæs. Leont. de sect. act. 8.

suaded thousands to believe in Jesus Christ. Among the bishops whom he appointed in different places, the most remarkable is St. Alexander, bishop of Comana. When there was question of choosing a prelate for that church, S. Gregory recommended the clergy to regard neither wealth nor nobility, but pure merit. In the crowd was confounded a man, whose occupation was to work in coal. (1) This was Alexander: by a special inspiration, he was deemed the most proper person, to be raised to bishoprick of Comana: he was accordingly chosen: received with loud applause by the people, and governed the church of Comana, until the persecution of Decius, when he was crowned with martyrdom.

St. Babylas, bishop of Antioch, terminated, at this same time, by a glorious martyrdom, his mortal career. (2) Of the miracles operated at his sepulchre, St. John Chrysostom, (in a discourse which is generally attributed to him) speaks with enthusiasm. The emperor Philip wishing to enter his church, on the vigil of Eas-

(1) Bolland. vit. S. Greg. Thaum.

(2) Euseb. in chron.

ter, to participate in the prayers of the faithful, was according to this father, refused admission, until he performed the penance which his sins deserved. Philip promised to submit to whatever penance he should inflict; and for a time proved that he was in earnest. But it does not appear that he persevered to the end. Of his having been converted to the Christian religion, there can be little doubt: (1) the only argument against it is, that he was ranked, after his death, among the gods. But this argument is a feeble one: since it is well known that the Roman people conferred this absurd honour on all the emperors, without any regard to their individual characters.

During his reign, many martyrs suffered at Alexandria. Of these, the most celebrated is the Virgin Apollonia, who, in an advanced age, signalized herself, and honoured the church, by her courage and virtues. Menaced by the pagan multitude with the fagot, if she refused to comply with their proposals, she courageously

(1) Euseb. 6. hist. 27. Vincent. Lerin. cap. 23. Orosius 1. 7. Cassiod. in chron. &c.

leaped into the flames which had been enkindled to alarm her. (1)

This epoch is marked in a singular manner, by the death of the celebrated, but unfortunate, Tertullian. It was the general persuasion among the ancients, that he died in the stern profession of heresy: and the sect of Tertullianists, which was not extinct in the days of St. Chrysostom, confirms this probable opinion. He was, without doubt, a man of profound and general erudition: notwithstanding the unfavourable account which he himself has left us, of his studies: his genius was ardent and glowing; his intellect penetrating and subtle: but his frequent deviations from sound doctrine, gave room to suspect, that he possessed more of vivacity than of solid judgment. Of his Apologetic we have already spoken. His books on baptism, penance, prayer and patience, on female dress and shows, were composed while yet in the bosom of the true religion. That on prescriptions expressly declares, that he then lived in communion with all the apostolic churches, particularly that of Rome, which he extols in the highest terms. Almost all his

(1) Euseb. 6. hist. 34.

other works were written after his fall: of these some are professedly directed against the Catholic church: and others are interspersed with excellent preservatives against the heresies, which the Montanists condemned. The treatises against Marcion and Praxeas contain many precious fragments. Of his works which are purely heretical, the principal are his treatise on monogamy; that on impurity, and that on the soul. His work, entitled the Robe, in which he adduces the reasons which caused him to take the philosopher's gown, is a rare example of decay of taste and degeneracy of style. It is difficult to conceive how so futile a production could have emanated from the pen of the author of the celebrated Apologeticus. (1)

Some years after Tertullian, died, in the fifty-ninth year of his age, the celebrated Origen: it is to be hoped, that this extraordinary man did not persist in error; his memory is not however, entirely free from suspicion: there was current among the ancients a proverb which is applied to Origen by Cassiodorus: "When

(1) Of Tertullian S. Jerome was accustomed to say: "*Laud ingenium hominis, damno hæreses.*" Hier. apol. adv. Ruff.

good, none better : when bad, none worse."

(1) The number of his writings according to Ruffinus, amounted to six thousand : he dictated at once without any perplexity, to seven amanuenses : this circumstance may account for many of the errors which are to be found in his works (2)

Soon after Tertullian and Origen, another luminary arose in the person of Thascius Cyprian, a Carthagenian ; of a senatorial family, conspicuous for its eloquence and nobility. He applied himself with equal success to the belles-lettres and profound sciences : and became well acquainted, not only with eloquence, but also with the different branches of literature. (3) He was born and educated in idolatry ; and continued in it for a long time, in despite of the exhortations of his friend Cæcilius. His lively imagination, his soft and voluptuous habits, ex-

(1) Ubi bené, nemo melius : ubi malè nemo pejus. Cassiod. inst. div. lect.

(2) Origen has had several apologists : the first is said to have been Pamphilus, martyr : St. Jerome was, at first, of this opinion ; but afterwards retracted it, and attributed the apology to Eusebius—Ruffinus also wrote in defence of Origen : but his work was censured by St. Jerome. See Spondanus p. 196. iv.

(3) Lactant. lib. 5. c. 1. Greg. Naz. orat. in laud. Cypr.

aggregated the sacrifice that Christianity would require at his hands ; and it was not till after a hard struggle that he could burst his fetters. " At that time," he writes in a letter to Donatus, " tossed upon the stormy sea of the world, and having no beacon to direct my way, I could hardly be persuaded, that God, in his mercy, would save me. I was not then aware, that a person may be born a second time ; and that by being regenerated in baptism, the old man is laid off, and a new one put on."

But Cyprian was sincere and resolute : regardless of the censure of his pagan friends, and the raillery of his enemies, he sold his possessions ; distributed the price among the poor ; embraced the state of celibacy ; lived in retirement ; and occupied his time in meditating, and studying the holy scriptures. He had a peculiar admiration for Tertullian : and was accustomed to style him his *master*. But the master was soon surpassed by the disciple : who, while he possessed an imagination equally strong and brilliant, displayed, at the same time, more taste, and solidity of judgment. He is generally esteemed the greatest orator among the Latin fa-

thers. "He possesses, says Lactantius, (1) such elegance of genius to adorn, and such neatness of diction to express, his sentiments, that it is hard to say in which he is more excellent." Such extraordinary merit and virtue could not be long unobserved or unrewarded. From a Neophyte he was raised to the dignity of a priest : and ~~donatus~~ dying a short time after, he was promoted to the episcopal chair, to the universal satisfaction of the people. His episcopacy, which commenced under such happy auspices, presented an unbroken series of ecclesiastical virtues. He diligently studied the public good : sanctity was depicted upon his countenance : and his whole person marked with dignity. He was engaging without obsequiousness ; reserved, without sullenness ; modest, without singularity ; and serious, without sadness. These qualities won the affection, and secured the veneration, of all who knew him.

Tranquillity had now continued during five years. But Philip was not of a character to maintain a long and settled calm : new difficul-

(1) Lact. ut sup.

ties began to appear : dissension tore the provinces : Decius, the descendant of an ancient family, in Pannonia, was sent to his native country, where the troops had thrown off all military discipline, and roved at large, in a general relaxation and licentiousness. Decius was a man of talents and integrity : and possessed a cultivated mind. With a view to escape his opprobrium, the soldiers strove to conciliate his favour by raising him to the imperial throne. He was, accordingly proclaimed emperor : and Philip, vanquished by him in a battle, was slain by his own soldiers.

A short time after this event, St. Fabian consecrated seven bishops, and sent them, together with a great number of inferior ministers, into the provinces of Gaul : these bishops were, according to St. Gregory of Tours, (1) Trophimus of Arles ; Paul of Narbonne ; Dionysius of Paris ; Gratian of Tours ; Saturninus of Toulouse ; Martial of Limoges ; and Austremonius of Auvergne.

St. Fabian, having sat fourteen years, suffered martyrdom under Decius. After his death, the

(1) 1 hist. Trac. 63.

holy see remained a year and a half vacant: it being impossible, on account of the persecution which broke out, at this epoch, to choose a supreme pastor.

The edict for the persecution (1) was published to all the provincial governors: the rigour with which it was executed, is almost incredible: all the powers of invention, and all the refinements of barbarity, were exercised against the faithful: martyrs were torn under the scorpion: and then having their wounds dipped in honey, exposed in the burning sun, to be tormented to death, by flies, gnats, or hornets.

St. Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem, (2) St. Sabina of Smyrna, and S. Ambrose the friend of Origen, received, at the same time, the palm of martyrdom.

Optimus, the proconsul, exercised through all Asia, the most inhuman cruelty. He examined a merchant by name Maximus, and would assist in person at his execution: after the saint had endured the torture for some time, the procon-

(1) Oros. lib. 7. cap. 21.

(2) Acta sinc. mart.

sul bade him acknowledge the folly of his obstinacy, and sacrifice to the gods. "Neither your iron hooks, nor heated plates, returned the martyr, will overcome him who is animated by the grace of God." Optimus then commanded him to be stoned.

Many others fell victims to the cruel superstition of these times: St. Quadratus at Nicomedia; S. S. Tryphon and Respicius at Nice; St. Christopher in Lycia; St. Mercury at Cæsarea of Cappadocia; and seven young men at Ephesus, commonly styled *the Seven Sleepers*. (1)

The triumph of St. Agatha, at Catana in Sicily, was not less renowned. Of her acts few seem properly authenticated: but the hymn composed in her honor by St. Damasus, and

(1) These seven young men, shutting themselves up in a cave to escape the fury of the persecution, died there: they derive the name of *Sleepers*, from the common Latin term used among the Christians: *Dormierunt in Domino*: they *slept* in the Lord. Another reason has been given for their appellation: by some it is said that they actually slept during two hundred years: and it may surprise the reader when he is informed, that for the latter opinion there are many authorities: Harum sententiarum says Baronius, quænam præferenda sit non equidem definiat, he, however, inclines in favour of the former. Vide, not. Be in Martyr. Rom. 27. Jul.

preface by St. Gregory, prove her claim to the highest celebrity.

At Nicomedia there were many martyrs; of whom the most celebrated were Lucian and Marcian. In the West, besides St. Agatha, the most illustrious were Tusca and Maura, at Ravenna, Abdon and Sennen, at Rome. In Africa the persecution raged with more violence, after the arrival of the proconsul. Every refinement of cruelty was exercised against the faithful: they were torn until no part of their bodies remained unmangled: and the prisons, though crowded, could not contain the number of confessors, who died unpitied, of hunger and thirst.

St. Cyprian, who, we have seen, was one of the most illustrious of the Christian teachers, was peculiarly obnoxious to the pagans. They saw him employed in defending a religion, which it was their aim to annihilate: stung with jealousy and transported with rage, they made the amphitheatre ring with their vociferations: "Cyprian to the lions," "Cyprian to the lions."

(1) His own personal safety did not occupy his thoughts: but his solicitude for the church in-

(1) Cypr. ep. 55. ad Cornel.

duced him to fly from the dangers which encompassed him. He retired into solitude : but did not there lead an inactive life. (1) He wrote frequent exhortatory letters to his priests, and the confessors in prison : " I conjure you, " he says in a letter to the clergy of Carthage, to redouble your fervour ; and since I am forced to be absent, while you do *your* duty, discharge *mine* also. Let not the present calamities be an excuse for any irregularity in ecclesiastical discipline, or for neglecting the suffering members of Jesus Christ ; not those only who are in chains, but all who still preserve the faith. Have a still more special care of widows, strangers, and the infirm. Yet a little courage, and peace will soon be restored to us." In writing to the confessors the vigilant pastor expressed his eagerness to enjoy once more, if possible, their blessed company. " Nothing," he assured them, " would be more agreeable to him, than to kiss their pure hands, loaded with chains, for having refused to sacrifice to idols : and their lips, consecrated by the confession of the adorable name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

(1) Pont. in vit. Cypr.

The holy bishop, Gregory Thaumaturgus, also retired only to exhibit to his flock an example of Christian prudence. As he had given them all birth in Jesus Christ, and knew that they were still "infants in religion," he took care not to expose them to the dangers of being apprehended, unless, by a peculiar indication, he knew it to be the will of Providence. His discretion was blessed in a striking manner: for during the whole of the persecution of Decius, history does not mention a single apostate at Neocæsarea.

Of the faithful, many, to avoid the calamities of the times, took refuge in solitary places; some fled even to the frightful wilds of Arabia, where they perished with hunger and thirst. Numbers fell victims to the rapacity of barbarians, or the depredation of robbers. Thousands flocked from Alexandria and all Egypt, into the solitudes of Thebias, from which the eremetical institution took its origin.

The first of those illustrious solitaries, was St. Paul, a native of lower Thebais. In his youth neither wealth nor temptation could lure him into any disorder: his fondest study was virtue:

but too humble to expose himself to death, he fled into the desert, where he found in the meditation of "eternal things," more substantial felicity, than he could have enjoyed in his earthly possessions. His dwelling was a cavern cut by the hand of nature, out of a rock, near which there was a stream of water. His grot was shaded by a palm-tree, which nourished the saint with its fruit, until the raven supplied him with miraculous food. In this deep solitude, with no companions but the monsters of the desert, Paul passed ninety-two years. After spending whole nights in prayer, he often complained that the morning rose too soon to disturb his heavenly joys. God did not make his servant known to any one except St. Anthony, a little before his death: which took place in the hundred and thirteenth year of his age. (1)

Notwithstanding the remonstrances and zeal of virtuous prelates, many abuses prevailed at Carthage, which were productive of fatal consequences. Multitudes of Christians, led astray by the temptations that surrounded them, abandoned the faith: and to avoid the shame of

(1) Hier. in chron.

public apostacy, they sent a written retractation of the faith to the governor: (1) thence they took the name of *Libellatici*. This degeneracy was to St. Cyprian a source of unspeakable grief. But the conduct of Felicissimus, a priest, pierced his soul with sorrow. This man, for a long time, lost no opportunity of afflicting the holy prelate. Not succeeding in a design which he meditated regarding the *Libellatici*, he broke out into open schism: raised up altar against altar: and led his followers upon a mountain, near the city, from which he hurled down his anathemas against all who refused to join his standard. The holy bishop finding it necessary to put a check to the growing evils, excommunicated Felicissimus. The public conduct of this man did not, like that of most impostors, assume the appearance of sanctity. (2) He was notorious for his extortions, and infamous for his immoralities. Novatus, a priest of Carthage, associated himself with Felicissimus: and became the principal author of the mischief. Novatus, to the darkest vices of the heart, added

(1) S. Cypr. de Cap. ep 52. ad Anton. ep 68. ad Hisp.

(2) Cyper. ep 38. 39. 40.

cruelty and rapacity: he is said to have plundered orphans, widows, and even the very churches: and after having starved to death his father, refused him the common tribute of sepulture. The voice of the public was raised against him; the faithful demanded an exemplary punishment, for those crying vices. He was to have been deposed, perhaps excommunicated; but the calamities of the times prevented the promulgation of the sentence. Not content with having distracted the church of Africa, he repaired to Rome, where he immediately formed many strict connexions. At Carthage he supported the faction of Felicissimus: at Rome, he embraced the system of Novatian according to which, the Christian who once had the misfortune to apostatize, was for ever excluded from the communion of the faithful. Such was the origin of the first schism that ever disturbed the peace, or broke the unity, of the Roman church.

